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Making Connections: An exploration of the relationship construction between educational psychologists and young people in the context of systemic change.

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# Abstract

Educational psychologists (EPs) work directly with children and young people (CYP) to promote the inclusion of their voice in decision-making processes. Whilst systemic theory, drawing on social constructionism, supports us to consider how we can create change through our collaborations with CYP, in educational psychology these partnerships tend to focus on our work relating to individual CYP. There is less evidence of EPs working with communities of CYP to make changes to the systems in which they live and learn at a group or organisational level.

My research explores the construction of the relationship between a group of EPs and a group of CYP in the context of systemic change. It focuses on how we can shift our gaze from individual to community level concerns when working with CYP as partners at a range of levels and provides insights into the barriers and opportunities for EPs in building these relationships.

I brought together a group of young people (YP) and a group of EPs, each active in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) systems in the same local authority (LA). With an interest in the historical development of the EP role in England I used Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to explore the relationship construction. The analysis allowed me to consider how the discourses being drawn upon open, or close, the opportunities for collaboration, particularly beyond the level of individual CYP.

I identified that the relationship could be constructed as *relationship as unestablished*, *relationship as a service* and *relationship as a partnership*, and I located these constructions within legal, inclusion, voice, medical, humanist and relational discourses. The findings of the research suggest that in fact it is experiential knowledge, often beginning with individual experiences, and the opportunity for dialogue, which open the possibility of collaboration between EPs and CYP as equal partners, even when addressing community level concerns. It is the opportunity for EPs and CYP to build relationships based on a shared understanding of each other’s experiences, which creates the conditions to take action together, at every level of systems.

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# Acronyms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| CoP | Code of Practice |
| CYP | Children and young people |
| EHCP | Education Health and Care Plan |
| EP | Educational Psychologist |
| FDA | Foucauldian Discourse Analysis |
| SENCO | Special Educational Needs Coordinator |
| SEND | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities |
| TEP | Trainee Educational Psychologist |
| YP | Young people |

# Glossary of Key Terms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Term** | **Definition** |
| Discourse | Written, spoken and other forms of text which contain “shared patterns of meaning” (Burman and Parker, 1993, p. 2) |
| Discursive object | The focus of the discourse analysis, in this case the relationship between EPs and CYP. |
| Discursive construction | The way in which discursive objects are created through discourse. |

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Developing Curiosity Through My Professional Journey

Before entering the field of educational psychology, I undertook postgraduate training in Community Education[[1]](#footnote-1) and my introduction to Freire’s (1996) liberatory educational theory informed my subsequent practice as an educator. Drawing on Freire’s concepts of praxis and conscientization, in which learners become aware of the sources of oppression in their lives through cycles of reflection and action, I understood my professional relationship with young people (YP) to be an educational collaboration, through which we were exploring our understanding of reality. Through this process, YP and I sought to enact change in the systems in which we lived and, in the process, learn about those systems, ourselves and the world.

In my reading about educational psychology, I was interested in the prospect that this too was a field of practice which supported CYPs’ educational journeys through a consideration of systems issues and in which their voice and participation in decision-making was integral to systemic change. On entering the field however, I was struck by contrasts with my previous professional experiences, such as an emphasis on EPs representing CYPs’ voices in systems rather than CYP having an active role in that process, and a focus on individual CYPs’ journeys in contrast to more collective concerns.

I remain interested in the differences and similarities in my professional roles, particularly with respect to how we understand our relationship to CYP in the context of working to create change within the systems in which they learn. I am responding with curiosity, as Burnham (1999) suggests, to the incoherence I have experienced in my contrasting experiences as informal educator, and Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP).

In a wider context, there seems to have been a burgeoning interest in similar ways of working, with other professional groups engaging with groups of CYP as active collaborators in systems change, working at organisational and policy levels. The language of coproduction appears to be increasingly used. For example, the Department for Education (DfE) fund the Making Participation Work programme (National Children’s Bureau, 2023) which supports participation for CYP with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). In mental health (Young Minds, 2021) CYP contributed to the development of the Future in Mind policy. It seems that there is a language and culture emerging around this way of working with CYP and I am interested in how the profession of educational psychology relates to that.

## 1.2 Context of the Relationship Between EPs and CYP

A brief exploration of the context in which the EP role has developed in England highlights the changing relationship EPs have with CYP in the context of systemic change.

Through the 20th century, Western psychology has explored many avenues which shift our lens away from a within-child focus on individual children, to the systems that surround them. For example, Vygotsky (1978) introduced a focus on children’s development in response to their interactions with the social world, and changes in social psychology (Armistead, 1974) challenged the applicability of a positivist approach. Psychology has engaged with social constructionist ideas that language constructs reality, rather than being a means of describing fixed, internal, psychological realities, through approaches such as discourse analysis and narrative psychology. Furthermore, the field of community psychology deliberately moves attention beyond individuals to wider communities.

The original conception of the EP role in England at the beginning of the 20th century was aligned with positivism and medical models of practice through the delivery of psychometric assessment and the associated categorisation and educational segregation of CYP (Arnold, 2017). More recently however, the role seems to have embraced more of the philosophies described above. Educational psychology practice reflects this change, through, for instance narrative approaches (Billington, 2000; Billington and Goodley, 2020) and in the application of systems thinking, considered in the seminal text *Reconstructing Educational Psychology* (Gillham, 1978).

These changes have impacted the relationship between EPs and CYP. As Billington and Goodley (2020) argue, the “relational space” (p. 375) created between the EP and CYP in narrative approaches offers the opportunity for them to create new narratives and in this sense, the relationship itself is a collaboration which effects change in the systems surrounding the CYP. In other interpretations of systems approaches however, such as consultation, some practitioners like Russell (2019) argue that the focus on systems over individual CYP necessitates a move away from work with CYP. Yet, organisational level systems models such as Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) which have influenced educational psychology, maintain an emphasis on collaboration with the members of the community with whom the work is organised, and I am interested in why the adoption of such approaches in educational psychology has not created more alliances with CYP.

The current EP role in England has a legal and policy context, with respect to the Children and Families Act (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (DfE & DoH, 2015) and these also have an emphasis on involving CYP in decision-making. The Children and Families Act (2014) stipulates that English LA’s (for which many EPs work) must consider “the views, wishes and feelings of the child” (Section 19) and stresses the importance of providing CYP with the information and support to be able to take part in decision-making. The SEND Code of Practice (CoP) also outlines principles for the participation of CYP in the shaping of local services, suggesting that “Effective participation happens when… it is evident at all stages in the planning, delivery and monitoring of services” (DfE & DoH, 2015, p. 22), thus, stretching CYPs’ participation beyond that of informing decision-making to a more active role. The 2015 CoP builds on the previous CoP, where EPs are explicitly placed as having a role in supporting work at the whole school level, including when working with groups of CYP (Department for Education and Skills, 2001, Section 10.8).

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 1989), specifically Article 12 relating to the “Right to be heard” (p. 5) is often cited in educational psychology literature but not usually alongside associated debates about its application in educational settings. For example, Lundy (2007) suggests that the meaning of Article 12 is often lost through over-summarising, and Jones (2017) argues that progress in applying Article 12 has been held back by schools taking a paternalistic attitude to participation. I take the position that the educational context in which EPs apply their practice is important and the debate further prompts me to maintain a critical approach to an examination of the ways in which EPs engage with issues relating to CYPs’ voice and participation.

Considering the range of influences on the development of the relationship between EPs and CYP I am interested in the inherent potential for collaborations with CYP as key members of the communities with which EPs work. It is the construction of that relationship upon which my research focuses.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

In recent years systems work has been confusingly used to describe anything and everything which an educational psychologist might do in the course of their work – other than interacting directly with children.

(Frederickson, 1990, p.131)

In my literature review I have considered whether recent theoretical influences on EP practice support an alternative position to Frederickson. I explore how the literature addresses the possibility of a collaborative relationship between EPs and CYP in the context of systemic change, particularly when moving beyond a focus on individual CYP to the possibility of them being involved in meaningful activity as members of educational communities.

As noted in the Introduction, educational psychology is a promising field in which this type of practice might be applied, with increasing emphasis on collaborative and systems focused work, as well as an interest in promoting the voice and participation of CYP. I begin the literature review with a consideration of EPs’ systemic practice, with a particular focus on the influence of social constructionism on systems thinking, where the relationships between actors in systems are at the heart of the change we might see; this provides a theoretical framework for exploring collaboration through relational approaches.

Whilst keen to embrace that theoretical framework for the opportunities it offers, I also deliberately consider literature in other areas. I am keen to address what I perceive as a gap between different areas of EP practice with respect to CYPs’ involvement in systemic change. I explore literature in the areas of community psychology, participatory research, voice and participation and coproduction, considering how each area addresses the possibility of EP collaboration with CYP which can produce change at the level of the system. My review of the literature suggests that the potential to bring these areas of practice together, to support collaborative relationships between EPs and CYP in the context of systemic change beyond the level of individual CYP, is not currently being realised.

## 2.1 EPs’ Systemic Practice and Collaborations with CYP

As Fox (2009) notes, systemic practice in educational psychology has been influenced by both family therapy roots and organisational change theory and whilst these have developed separately, they have both been influenced by social constructionist thinking, with an emphasis on collaboration. In the context of this research, I am particularly interested in exploring whether these social constructionist influences on EP systemic practice have prompted collaborations with CYP.

### 2.1.1 Consultation

Considering consultation as a key form of systemic EP practice, I have explored how the related literature directly addresses the possibility of including CYP in consultation work. In Wagner’s (2000) consultation model, influences from the reconstruction movement (Gillham, 1978) as well as underpinning principles of social constructionism and social interactionism, support practitioners to consider the wider systems surrounding children and study interactions between social actors, rather than focus solely on individual children. Wagner does advocate work with children as part of the consultation approach and likewise, Woolfson et al. (2008) make suggestions about sensitive and supportive ways of doing that. It is notable, however, that the process described by Woolfson et al. is one where CYP are asked to share their views with adults, rather than participate collaboratively in a process, as we might expect in following models of consultation (Wagner, 2000).

Furthermore, Hobbs et al. (2000) suggest that consultation can include a form of direct work with CYP, which includes them as active collaborators in that process in much the same way that adults are involved, and that this could be an empowering process. Although Hobbs et al. (2000) address issues such as ensuring CYP have an informed understanding of what they are getting involved in, they do not directly address what would be involved in the process of involving CYP in a “genuinely collaborative” (p. 114) way. Practice suggestions are made, such as integrating Personal Construct Psychology, or solution-focused approaches, but these all emphasise work with each child as an individual, with a focus on their individual journeys.

Nevertheless, Hobbs et al. (2000) suggest that working this way with CYP could have a profound impact on the role of the EP:

Incorporating various ways of consulting with children needs to be seen not just as a technical change in practice, but as a political change in focus and approach. In order to empower children to take greater control of their own learning, educational psychologists need to consider how their work with and about children can be genuinely collaborative with children.

Fundamentally, we need to find ways to position ourselves so we can hear children's stories, and so that these stories can challenge the narrative of our own practice with them. We need to work so that children and young people feel they can own and direct their own story.

(p. 114)

The assertion is interesting, suggesting that working directly with children and young people to understand their views is not just a bolt-on to our practice, but could fundamentally alter how we understand the role of educational psychologist.

### 2.1.2 Narrative

I would suggest that Hobbs et al. (2000), in the quote above, are introducing the possibility of narrative practice being a potential route through which we can build relationships with CYP which offer the possibility of creating agency for them. In later work, Hobbs et al. (2012), provide an account of a variety of ways in which narrative approaches can be applied in EP practice, spanning individual work directly with CYP, work with groups of CYP and work at the level of the organisation. This work highlights the possibility of collaboration with CYP when working at an individual casework level. Furthermore, it draws out the ways in which narrative work, by engaging with the experiential knowledge of CYP and thickening alternative stories to the deficit stories often presented to EPs of CYP, is a form of taking action with CYP which can impact the systems around them. Yet, when considering narrative work applied at the level of the organisation, Hobbs et al. (2012) do not describe, or consider, the collaborations involved in that work, including CYP. Reflecting on Hobbs et al (2012) as well as others who write about narrative approaches in EP practice (Billington, 2000; Fogg, 2017), leads me to consider that there is promise in this approach as a way of building collaborations for systemic change, especially if we consider the relational approach to work with CYP as a form of action. Perhaps that promise could be extended into organisational development work as well.

Smith (2005) makes a distinction between narrative approaches which focus on the stories used to make meaning of individual experiences and those which address how stories are linked to wider systems such as families or schools. In the context of Northern Ireland, Smith’s research addresses how a narrative approach can be used by educational psychology to contribute to a peace culture in schools. The study asked child participants to create poems on the subject of peace, which were then interpreted by a group of educational professionals using the social constructionist approach of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). The purpose of the work was to support the development of alternative stories of peace (in contrast to stories of conflict) which might contribute positively to cultures of inclusion and democracy. Smith’s study provides an interesting perspective on how narrative approaches can be extended beyond work which focuses on the individual to organisational change. Yet whilst it brings CYPs’ voice into that work, it falls short of extending that collaboration with CYP into the meaning-making process supported at an organisational level. Smith argues that:

…school improvement for peace requires the development of an alternative epistemology of professional practice based on a relational redrawing of psychological processes.

(Smith, 2005, p. 74).

I argue that considering EPs’ professional practice more generally (not just with a specific focus on peace/conflict in schools) we can extend the power of that relational work beyond that which focuses on individual CYP.

### 2.1.3 Solution Focused

I am interested in the parallels between narrative practice and solution-focused practice. As Stobie et al. (2005) note, solution-focused approaches also draw on the systemic therapeutic tradition. They outline the ways in which these approaches are applied in educational psychology practice, through individual work, as well as work in consultations, service level work with staff and work with groups of CYP. They note the original conception of solution-focused therapy (de Shazer, 1985) to be creating change through the therapeutic relationship and, similar to narrative approaches, reflecting social constructionist perspectives in that the therapist and client create change through the linguistic exchange. In that sense the approach, in a similar way to narrative practice, does suggest EPs can have collaborative relationships with CYP which create systemic change. As with narrative approaches, I am interested in the idea that solution-focused perspectives can also be applied in work beyond that therapeutic relationship, in systems relevant to CYPs’ lives, and that CYP can be involved in that work. Simm and Ingram (2008) go some way towards doing that, through an action research project which supported schools to develop the use of solution-focused approaches. Although the project primarily focused on staff’s use of solution-focused approaches, it also included pupils’ peer support. However, the element of reflection (as part of the action research cycle) on the use of solution-focused practice only included staff and I think it would have been interesting to extend that to include pupils, acknowledging the author’s view that action, “usually involves people in researching their own practice or situation” (Simm & Ingram, 2008, p. 44).

### 2.1.4 Organisational Level Work

As noted earlier, the introduction of systems work in educational psychology in England is often associated with the publication of *Reconstructing Educational Psychology* (Gillham, 1978). Gillham argues for a move away from the focus on individual CYP, suggesting that this should be replaced with more emphasis on work at the level of the organisation. Burden (1978) in the same book outlined what was seen to be a new approach in educational psychology, considering the role within systems theory. Reflecting back on that early work, Burden (1999) suggests that we should understand his interpretation of a systems theory to be one example of a range of approaches, where he was drawing on a very specific model called Organisational Development, which did not include the meaning individual students might make of the systems being examined. Furthermore, he argues that that his interpretation was not clear enough about the epistemological underpinnings of the systems approaches being described, which could be aligned with a positivist position. Other approaches in the field of organisational development have, however, been influenced by social constructionism, for example models such as Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). In order to consider EPs’ systems work at the level of the organisation, and the possibility that this could include collaborations with CYP, I have also explored the ways in which Appreciative Inquiry has been applied in educational psychology.

Seaton (2021) describes the use of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in work carried out by an educational psychologist in a Scottish secondary school as a means of creating organisational change around support for mental health and wellbeing. The study did include pupils as participants, although their participation did not extend to the action planning stage of the AI. Although the reasons for this were partly due to practical issues, in the study Seaton also argues for the importance of, “top down leadership” (p. 43), perhaps rather negating the value of CYPs’ participation in the full process of systemic change.

Doveston and Keenaghan (2010) report on a project where educational psychologists supported teachers to apply a collaborative consultation framework in their practice, which drew on AI and solution-focused principles. The aim of this work was, “to promote more effective interpersonal relationships by identifying what is already working in the class rather than focusing on the difficulties and problems” (p. 131). The emphasis on the work was on providing structure for the teachers in the study to apply these theoretical constructs to reflect on, and potentially change, their practice. The study did not address the possibility of pupils being included in this process.

Considering examples of EPs’ organisational development work, other than AI work, I found a continuation of the theme of what I consider to be missed opportunities to involve CYP in processes of meaningful organisational change. For example, Hughes et al. (2019) applied the PATH (Pearpoint et al., 1995) person centred planning tool to address and support organisational change in a school, but without the involvement of CYP in the process. The original PATH model uses a collaborative discussion to plan for an individual child’s preferred future. Whilst it is an interesting adaptation to apply this model to school organisational change rather than change for one child or young person, I would argue that it is not particularly innovative to remove CYPs’ participation from the process, especially given the importance of including CYPs’ voice in person-centred practice. Involving the pupil community in the PATH process might create a plan which reflects the needs, wishes and feelings of the people at the centre of a school.

Reviewing the literature relating to EPs’ systemic practice and the opportunities this offers for collaborative work between EPs and CYP, it appears that social constructionist approaches to systemic work do emphasise a shift in emphasis in the EP role to one where we work in collaboration with clients through relational means, to create change. However, the EP literature which addresses systemic practice either appears to maintain a focus on individual CYP, or, if working at the level of the organisation, mostly excludes CYP from that work. I am interested in EP practice which could potentially draw on systemic influences, which considers a shift away from the focus on individual CYP yet maintains their inclusion in processes of change. As Simon and Chard (2014) note, in their thoughts regarding the application of systemic theory in qualitative research:

We have theories of change which reach beyond dominant stories of a single unit and can engage people in reflexive inquiry about the systems within which they live and work.

(p. xi)

## 2.2 Community Psychology

Given my interest in the connections and contrasts between my experiences in informal education and educational psychology, I am interested in the connection between Freire’s (1996) theories of liberatory education and community psychology. As Kagan et al. (2020) argue, community psychology has liberatory theory as an underpinning foundation:

The existence of oppression and its pervasive and persistent nature give reason for the existence of critical community psychology as part of a wider family of liberatory praxis. It makes liberation the central aim, at all levels of the system, defining the relevance, the effectiveness and the truth of psychological concepts and tools.

(Kagan et al. 2020, p 57)

I carried out literature searches to explore the possibility that Freire’s (1996) ideas might be directly applied in educational psychology. Whilst there were some references to Freire in the literature (Butler and Warren, 2012; Donaldson, 2019; Donaldson and Allen-Handy, 2020), they were not in the context of work which explored how EPs’ work with CYP might promote systemic change. Exploring the community psychology literature more widely though does suggest that it might provide a useful theoretical base for working beyond the level of the individual. Considering the focus of educational psychology’s gaze and whether as a profession we can usefully shift that focus to communities rather than individual CYP, community psychology offers a useful perspective. I have explored whether this also offers a platform for the inclusion of CYP in processes of change, although have found that most literature is focused on the adults in those communities rather than CYP.

Kagan et al. (2020) argue that community psychology does not assume the individual human as the centre of psychological inquiry, but that we can work at the level of the collective and consider relationships not just between individuals but also, “collective and social-systemic relations” (p. 21). Prilleltensky (2014), who writes extensively on community psychology (see for example, Prilleltensky, 2001; Prilleltensky, 2012; Prilleltensky and Nelson, 2000), makes an interesting case for including community psychology principles in educational psychology practice, arguing that in order for education to be transformatory it needs to engage in a paradigm which encompasses the principles of being strength-based, empowering, proactive and operating at the level of community, rather than the individual. He proposes that as psychologists working in education, taking action on these principles requires us to commit to working with others in groups, proactively, to create change. He suggests that this way of working is in contrast to an alternative, where we work in isolation, responding reactively to problems brought to us.

I carried out a further literature search on the applicability of community psychology principles in educational psychology practice and this highlighted a series of articles from one volume of the same journal[[2]](#footnote-2) (Davis & Cahill, 2006; Jones, 2006; King & Wilson, 2006; MacKay, 2006; Stringer et al., 2006; Wood, 2006). I noted that each of these articles had an absence of theory or practice which relates to working in collaboration withCYP. Khoshkoo (2017), reflecting on his own practice, also addresses the application of community psychology in educational psychology practice and he too he interprets this in the context of work with adults such as parents or other professionals, also ignoring how these principles might impact on our work and relationships with CYP.

Considering these examples, it is interesting that whilst educational psychology might at times draw on community psychology principles and shift its gaze from the individual to the community, the engagement with communities appears to be carried out with little reflection on who from the community is, or is not, included in that work, or who might benefit most from it. I would argue that there is a strong case for the inclusion of CYP in those collaborations.

## 2.3 Participatory Research

Participatory research offers interesting examples of educational psychologists engaging with CYP in a collaborative way. For example, Wallace and Giles (2019) consider the application of participatory research methods in educational psychology practice and draw out features of that practice such as working collaboratively in consultation work, involving service users in problem-solving questions and keeping aware of power balances between EPs and the people with whom they work. Wallace and Giles also provide examples of EP practice which applies a participatory research approach by exploring practice at the level of the collective rather than the individual. For example, Pearson and Howe (2017) created their research team with a group of primary school pupils, investigating how to change playground behaviour.

In a further piece of participatory research, exploring EPs’ views of a film created by a youth forum on their interactions with EPs, Giles and Rowley (2020) reflect:

This paper suggests that there is a need for on-going critical reflection on the part of EPs on how to work in ways which are collaborative, empower YP to effect change, and shape professional practice through the sharing of views and experiences.

(p. 90)

Whilst these examples suggest that participatory research is a useful avenue through which to explore EPs’ collaborative work with CYP which can effect change at the system level, I am interested that there are no explicit links made with other systemic theoretical models prevalent in educational psychology. As Giles and Rowley (2020) note, there is further work to be carried out to understand how EPs can work collaboratively with CYP in the context of creating change. My research therefore aims to draw more explicitly on social constructionist views of systemic change and the relational focus of that, to explore the construction of EPs’ relationship with CYP in this context.

## 2.4 Voice, Participation and Coproduction Literature

### 2.4.1 Voice and Participation

There is an abundance of literature addressing issues relating to CYPs’ voice and participation in EP practice. Gersch et al. (1993) suggest that EPs’ research abilities, experience, and training means we are well-placed to enact the role of gathering CYPs’ views. In addition, in Hardy and Hobbs’s (2017a) collection of papers on the subject of CYPs’ voice in qualitative research, Harding (2017) considers the importance of EPs capturing the views of all children, including those who may be marginalised in terms of their learning difficulties. In another example, Smillie and Newton (2020) consider the ways in which CYPs’ views are gathered by EPs and how EPs understand the purpose of that process. Furthermore, Ingram (2013) provides robust discussions of how EPs interpret the views expressed by CYP.

Greig et al. (2014) indicate that as EPs it is important that we define what we mean by the term participation. With some exceptions, such as Smillie and Newton (2020), I note that the literature I reviewed has very little explicit discussion of the purpose of EPs’ engagement with CYPs’ voice and participation, and as a result there is not much discussion of how that work might bring about system change. Some literature, such as Hardy and Hobbs (2017b), considers the impact of CYPs’ voice on decision making and frames this within wider models of participation, but this does not address the possibility of CYPs’ involvement stretching beyond influencing decision making to being actors in creating change, taking action alongside adults such as EPs. Nor does this literature consider how EPs’ engagement with CYP might be a feature of systemic practice. The literature has a predominantly individual focus, concerned with the engagement of individual CYP and their personal educational journeys.

In contrast, Gersch et al. (1993) report on a range of pieces of work organised around a “Pupil Involvement Project” (p. 40), in which EPs supported the CYPs’ engagement with whole school projects such as working parties to address attendance. I note that this paper does not make explicit links with systemic theory, yet as Gersch et al. (1993) conclude, “The authors' collected work in this area has shown clearly that young people can make a valuable contribution to improving both their own circumstances and those of their peers.” (p. 41). It is interesting to me that the range of work of this type described by Gersch et al. (1993), occurred around 30 years ago, with much less since reported in the literature.

However, Hartas (2011) provides another example of literature which addresses EPs’ role in supporting CYPs’ participation beyond their own individual journeys. In his discussion of his research with CYP described as “disaffected” (p. 111) he offers a clear use of the term participation to describe a transformatory process that can happen in schools when pupils are supported to influence the development of training and curricula. He argues that EPs are well placed to support this process and facilitate the conversations between staff and pupils. In contrast to other literature, Hartas’s research makes a good link between EP practice and participatory theory in the context of work with CYP which can create system change. I am interested in extending the perspectives from Hartas’s research into work with other groups of CYP with which EPs have contact.

### 2.4.2 Coproduction

The concept of coproduction is now applied to educational psychology in a policy context through the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), with an emphasis not just on supporting CYPs’ voice in decision-making, but also in ensuring they are equal partners with adults in the design and delivery of local services. In this sense, coproduction offers potential as a conceptual base for CYPs’ collaborations with EPs in creating systemic change. Coproduction has been defined by the New Economics Foundation (Stephens et al. 2008):

This is not about consultation or participation – except in the broadest sense. The point is not to consult more, or involve people more in decisions; it is to encourage them to use the human skills and experience they have to help deliver public or voluntary services.

(p. 10)

Boswell et al. (2021a) also make a distinction between participation and coproduction, suggesting that while participation can be understood as children and young people’s involvement in decision making, coproduction instead, “refers to the co-ownership within these decision-making processes” (p. 2). I would argue that the term participation can be understood in a range of ways and as Hartas (2011) notes, it can be used to describe a process which is transformatory for both the CYP involved as well as the systems in which they are taking action. The distinction between participation and coproduction proposed by Boswell et al. (2012a) is perhaps, therefore, not as binary as suggested.

Boswell et al.’s (2021a) study directly address the issue of professionals coproducing SEND services with CYP, explicitly considering the possibility of moving beyond individual casework to work which impacts at a systems level. Whilst this paper by Boswell et al. provides valuable insights into practitioners’ perspectives on how to support further work in this area, the study worked with participants from a range of professions rather than only EPs and did not consider perspectives from CYP.

Boswell et al. (2021b) carried out a further study exploring coproduction which *was* focused specifically on educational psychology and had CYP as participants. Again, this study provides useful insights into the broad issue of EPs’ work with CYP which might impact on systems change. However, it has a very specific focus on the coproduction of an EP service rather than the wider systems in which EPs work and does not make links between EPs’ wider systemic practice and the potential collaboration between EPs and CYP.

From my own practice experience, the use of the term ‘coproduction’ is commonplace in educational psychology, although I wonder if it is used interchangeably with the term ‘co-construction’ and used to refer to work where staff in schools, parents/carers and CYP are involved in a collaborative process of decision-making around setting outcomes for an individual child or young person. I was interested to note that my literature searches did not produce any results for studies which explore the use of the term in this context. However, from a practice perspective, it is notable that the use of the term refers to work in which CYP might be involved in varying degrees in decision-making, but not necessarily in the design and delivery of services, a distinctive aspect of coproduction as noted by the National Co-production Advisory Group (n.d.). Although there does not seem to be literature published, as yet, which addresses this, I am aware of work in various educational psychology services in which EPs are working collaboratively with parents and carers, as well as CYP, to create systems level change using the language of coproduction. For example, in Rotherham, the work of Genuine Partnerships and Guiding Voices is facilitated by EPs and seeks to work in partnership with parents and carers as well as CYP (Genuine Partnerships, 2023; Whiting & Johnson, 2023). It seems as if EP practice is perhaps developing in ways the literature does not yet fully address, and my research is a contribution to extending our understanding of EP practice in this respect.

## 2.5 Summary of Literature Review

In summary, my literature review aims to explore what has been written about the possibility of EPs working collaboratively with CYP to create change in the systems in which CYP live and learn.

Literature relating to systemic practice presents opportunities in terms of drawing on social constructionism, the collaborative working relationships emphasised within that and the aim of creating system change. Although there are good examples of EPs applying these ideas both in direct work with individual CYP as well as in organisational level change, I note a gap in CYP and EPs working together at the level of organisational change and so beyond the focus on individual CYPs’ stories. Community psychology opens the possibility of working beyond the level of the individual in pursuit of promoting wellness for CYP. It also suggests a basis for working collaboratively with members of communities, however EP practice informed by community psychology appears to mostly explore those collaborations in terms of relationships with adults.

The voice, participation and coproduction literature in relationship to educational psychology practice can at times lack clarity about the purpose of EPs’ work with CYP, and therefore the potential for collaborative systems change work with CYP is not always well-defined. In contrast, participatory research and coproduction approaches do offer robust theoretical bases. Yet my review suggests there is a gap in the coproduction literature specifically considering work between EPs and CYP in collaborating on systems change work beyond the example of EP services.

Considering the literature reviewed in these key areas, my curiosity has developed about the *relationship* between EPs and CYP. The literature demonstrates that EPs draw on theory which emphasises collaborative working relationships and EPs, through their voice, participation and coproduction work, promote the importance of CYPs’ involvement in decision making. Yet there appears to be a disconnect between these two areas of practice. I am interested in that disconnect and how the relationship between EPs and CYP is constructed to create it. I am particularly interested in the gaps in the literature with respect to CYPs’ collaboration with EPs in organisational level systems work which reaches beyond their individual educational journeys. My research therefore considers the construction of the relationship between EPs and CYP in that context.

The literature has also acted as a guide to my epistemological and ontological position: given the opportunities that social constructionism provides in terms of creating collaborative working relationships, I feel that it is an appropriate lens through which to study the relationship between EPs and CYP.

## 2.6 Development of Research Questions

I build on the existing literature by seeking to extend the idea of creating system change through collaborative relationships between EPs and CYP. I hope to build on work which seeks to change the SEND systems directly impacting on individual CYP, to a wider range of systems at group, organisational and strategic level. Furthermore, I aim to apply the ideas embedded in community psychology with respect to working at the level of the collective, to work with CYP: for the community level concerns identified by CYP to be central to the systemic practice of EPs.

I apply the aims of the research in my analysis by:

* Considering how the different constructions of the relationship between EPs and CYP open and close the possibilities for collaboration, in the context of the groups discussing their respective systems level work.
* Studying how the use of discourses develops through the process of EPs and YP preparing to and then meeting with each other, with the purpose of informing our understanding of supporting relationship building between these two groups in practice.

I have distilled these aims into my research questions, which are outlined below. The following is a brief explanation of my understanding of how the research questions reflect the aims of the research.

The research questions address my interest in exploring the relationship between EPs and CYP from a social constructionist perspective, where the relationship is understood as constructed, rather than something that can be uncovered (as would be understood from a more realist perspective).

I made a deliberate choice to explore the relationship between EPs and CYP in the context of the wider systemic context in which EPs and YP are *both* active, and where the potential exists for them to come together in collaboration, rather than restrict my research to the narrow focus on an EP service. I am interested in the idea that there exist examples of places where there are already groups of EPs practising systemically, as well as groups of YP taking action in the same SEND systems, yet they do not currently interact. I see the project as an opportunity to bridge the gap between these two groups, in order to allow for an exploration of how the relationship between them is constructed, and to consider how the potential for collaboration is thereby opened, or closed. The research questions are designed to consider the relationship construction from the perspectives of EPs and YP, to reflect my interest in that collaborative relationship, where YP have as active a role in that exploration as EPs.

The research questions have a focus on SEND systems to reflect the key systems in which the two groups are operating. Although some of the literature I have reviewed critiques the idea that the focus of EPs work should be the assessment and identification of SEND, nevertheless this remains a key system in which EPs practice. The group of CYP participants with whom the research collaborates are members of a youth SEND participation group, so the focus of their work is SEND, rather than the wider systems in which EPs might work.

Community psychology, and systemic practice literature have also influenced the research questions, through their emphasis on collective interests over individual concerns. The research questions therefore focus on a community rather than individual YP.

Finally, the second research question is explicit in considering the implications of what we have learnt about the relationship construction for EP practice. The starting point for my research was a question about practice, and I want that to remain central. Although there are some philosophical discussions with which the research grapples, it is with the ultimate aim of considering how EPs can practice in a way which supports the development of systems which are designed and delivered for the benefit of CYP.

## 2.7 Research Questions

These research interests have been refined into the following research questions:

RQ1. How do educational psychologists and a community of young people who are active in a SEND participation group construct their relationship in the context of participating in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) systems?

RQ2: What are the implications of the constructed relationship between educational psychologists and a community of young people who are members of a SEND participation group, for educational psychologists' systemic practice?

# Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter I will provide an outline and rationale for the methodology of the research project. This is framed and informed by Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, but also has important themes relating to participation and action research.

## 3.1 Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA)

As Macnaghten (1993) notes, discourse analysis as a broad field takes the epistemological view that what we can know of reality is socially constructed and it therefore presents as an appropriate methodology through which to approach my research which, as I have outlined in the literature review, has social constructionist underpinnings. However, as Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017) propose, since the rise in interest in language in psychology, the term discourse analysis has been used to refer to a range of approaches to studying discourse. Indeed, Wetherell (2001a) suggests there are six separate types of discourse analysis. I will outline here my understanding of FDA and why it is an appropriate approach to address the issues of interest identified in my literature review.

Georgaca & Avdi (2012) propose that discourse analysis has developed into two main categories, Discursive Psychology, exemplified by the work of for instance Edwards & Potter (1992), and approaches informed by writers such as Foucault, Barthes and Derrida, such as outlined by Burman & Parker (1993). I understand FDA to be in line with this second tradition. It should be noted, however, that others such as Wetherell (2001b) do not make this neat distinction and understand Discursive Psychology to cross into both these areas. In brief, I understand FDA to offer a perspective on discourse analysis which considers the political and social context of language use and makes connections between this and wider themes of power and knowledge (Willig, 2013).

Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017) emphasise that FDA does not have a prescribed approach and in that sense, FDA is perhaps not an accurate title but could perhaps be better understood as an approach to discourse analysis informed by Foucault’s ideas (Foucault, 1978), however, for simplicity I describe my approach as FDA.

In the context of my research, I am interested in the specific topic of how language constructs the relationship between EPs and YP. To return to the distinction between discourse analysis approaches, Macnaghten (1993) suggests that we can separate methods which use the language of ‘repertoires’ (p.52) which concentrate on how grammar constructs language to have particular effects, and approaches which use the language of ‘discourse’ (p.52) in which there are ‘implied social relationships’ (p.52). FDA uses the language of discourse and for the purposes of my research, which attends directly to the social relationship between EPs and CYP, it is appropriate to use this latter method.

Considering the relationship on which I focus, I also acknowledge my own role in the process of the research and how I enter the relationship, both as facilitator of groups but also taking a lead in the analysis. FDA reflects this perspective in the way it understands the researcher as the ‘author’ (Willig, 2013) of knowledge, rather than discoverer. I reflect on this through the analysis and interpretation of the data.

As much as my research is concerned with the relationship between EPs and CYP and how they position themselves with respect to each other, I am interested in that relationship in the context of EP practice, as reflected in my second research question. I want to explore through the research how the construction of the relationship opens and/or closes the potential for collaboration between EPs and CYP with a view to that relationship effecting change in the systems in which it is located. FDA aligns with this research interest, with a focus on exploring how subjects draw upon available discourses, how this affects the positions they take in reference to one another and the implications of these positions for what is possible in terms of practice.

It is discourse, not the subjects who speak it, which produces knowledge. Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the *episteme*, the *discursive formation*, the *regime of truth*, of a particular period and culture. Indeed, this is one of Foucault’s most radical propositions: the ‘subject’ is *produced within discourse.*

(Hall, 1997, p. 55)

As Hall notes, Foucault proposed that the discourses which subjects draw on in language should be understood as existing within the boundaries set by a particular place and time and FDA applies this idea in discourse analysis. Considering the attention I give to the context in which EPs are practising, I am interested in the way FDA focuses on how the discursive constructions used in texts are located in the discourses available to them depending on social, material and institutional structures and practices.

As Burman and Parker (1993) note, work informed by Foucault such as that of Rose (1979), who explored the relationship between psychology and intelligence measurement, and Walkerdine’s (1988) exploration of the interplay between psychological knowledge and education, have also been used as a critique of the operation of psychology. I too am interested in exploring the relationship between EPs and CYP in the context of the systems in which they are both actors and with a view to deepening our understanding of how psychology is being practised in that relationship. As I will return to later in the analysis, it is useful to consider other discourse analyses that use FDA in related contexts, such as that of Walkerdine’s, to inform my own analysis.

I am also interested in how power operates in the relationship, given the role EPs have had, and I argue continue to have in the application of psychology, to label and segregate CYP. The connection between discourse, power and knowledge is one of Foucault’s key ideas (Foucault & Sheridan, 2002) and is integrated into FDA. As Hall et al. (2013) note, Foucault argued that discourses are located across texts and, in the use of particular discourses, meaning is created, and knowledge is constructed. From Foucault’s perspective, power is embedded in the way “regimes of truth” (Foucault & Gordon, 1980, p. 131) are created when we employ and accept forms of knowledge through the use of certain discourses. As Foucault argued in his studies of the way prisons operate (Foucault, 1977), or the way societies understand mental illness (Foucault, 1989), these forms of knowledge and the power implicit within them, can become so entrenched in the way we understand our worlds that we no longer see them. Equally, however, Foucault (1998) noted how different ways of constructing knowledge through discourse can resist or subvert the ways in which power operates. I am interested in the potential for FDA, which incorporates these ideas, to support an exploration of what forms of knowledge are being constructed of the relationship between EPs and YP, how this links to the shared context in which EPs and YP take action, and what we can learn from this about the possibility of collaboration.

I am particularly interested in the focus on knowledge, power and discourse, where the context is the forms of knowledge both groups bring to the relationship. I discussed in the literature review the focus in psychology on the value of experiential knowledge through the lens of narrative perspectives. I am conscious of the contrast between this and the ‘expert’ knowledge with which EPs have traditionally been expected to draw on. I am also interested in the link to the formal education context in which the relationship exists, and the way knowledge is used and understood in that forum.

I am also keen to explore how this research can highlight the potential for *different* ways for EPs to relate to CYP and different forms of practice which support this. Burman (1996) suggests it is possible to:

…go beyond the determinism of structures and resignation to the ways these oppress and regulate us, to elaborate strategies and document activities that – in theoretical, methodological, professional and everyday arenas – offer some scope for movement and change.

(p. 1)

Whilst I am interested in how FDA acknowledges the regulatory effect of the structural and material context in which discourse is constructed, I want to ensure I do not use this in a deterministic way. I am also interested in how discourse can be drawn on as an act of resistance.

It is important to acknowledge as well that this thesis itself is drawing on discourses, such as coproduction and participation, which are not benign. In setting out to explore these discourses I have been conscious of whether I am promoting these ideas in educational psychology and presenting them as unquestionably for the benefit of CYP, or the profession, or education. Whilst I do acknowledge my interest in particular ways of working with CYP, I am also aware that concepts such as youth participation encompass a range of models (see for example Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Treseder, 1997). Furthermore, I am interested in the perspectives of, for instance, James & Prout (2014) who suggest that the idea of childhood itself is a social construction, or Davis and Hills’s (2006) argument that the application of the concept of participation in practice can be problematic in terms of ensuring opportunities are representative, child-led, or enacting change in line with children’s views. Considering this, I am keen to maintain a critical view of how the discourses we use about our work with children open or close the possibility of working in these ways, how this helps us understand our role, and the implications for our future practice.

### 3.1.1 Limitations of FDA

FDA has no one prescribed method, which can make it difficult to know how to carry it out. Willig (2013) does suggest a six-step approach to carrying out FDA, although as she acknowledges this does not include a historical analysis, which is important for this piece of research. Others, such as Parker (1992), do suggest ways to include that historical perspective. Whilst I have attempted to draw on Parker’s ideas, there is potential for the lack of detailed method to impact on the quality or robustness of the approach, which I have addressed later in this chapter.

There are also important feminist critiques of Foucault, such as from Hartsock (1990) who argues that Foucault describes a world from a position unrelated to women, and whose theory of power does not offer enough in terms of suggesting *how* we might enact change from the status quo.

Nevertheless, as Willig (2013) notes, FDA can provide a way of exploring how the discursive constructions used by participants position them socially with reference to others and therefore provide us some insight into their subjective experience. Willig notes however, these insights can never be more than a conjecture.

## 3.2 Positionality

I am conscious of the way I am positioning myself as a curious explorer of new territory, educational psychology. I have deliberately attempted to maintain that position as I feel it has allowed me to maintain a fresh perspective on the EP role. My identity as an EP has evolved, however, as I have proceeded through my training and the delivery of this research, with a growing sense of belonging to the profession. I have attempted to maintain a reflective and reflexive stance in relation to the impact of that changing identity and its impact on the research. To reflect my sense of gradual inclusion into the profession I write as a member of the educational psychology community throughout the thesis.

In exploring the incongruence I have experienced in making the transition from informal education to educational psychology, I am interested in both the differences and similarities between the roles. For instance, previously I often worked in grassroots organisations rather than in the partly statutory role of EP, where an integral aspect of the LA EP role is to write statutory assessments for Education Health and Care Plan Assessments (EHCPs), as detailed in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015). Although I recognise that informal education is a very different field from the formal education system in which EPs are primarily applying their practice I am interested in the shared interest in the value of CYPs’ experiential knowledge. In my research these differences and similarities act as a frame to my examination of the construction of EPs’ relationship to CYP in the context of systemic change.

As noted earlier, I attempt to maintain a critical approach to the possibility of EPs working collaboratively with CYP as part of their systemic practice. Whilst acknowledging an interest in these ways of working, this research explores the power mediated when EPs and CYP work together to influence systemic change. As such, I hope to provide further critical insight into the relationship between EPs and CYP in this context to inform how those relationships can be built to the benefit of CYP.

I also think it is important to acknowledge the different epistemologies I consider in my research journey, in moving from my interest in Freire (1996) who drew on the structuralist position of Marx (1976), into the poststructuralist position of social constructionism, which I explore through systemic theory. I am also conscious of the debates in the field of discourse analysis with respect to epistemology, and I have had to weave my way through this debate in the context of my specific research. As Harper (2012) suggests, most forms of discourse analysis take a social constructionist stance, but can vary between “strong” (p. 91) and “weak” (p. 91) social constructionist positions. Harper notes that this milder version can be considered “Critical realist social constructionism” (p. 92). As Willig (2013) notes, FDA shares a relativist ontological position with other forms of discourse analysis in that it understands the world that we study as having multiple forms and as constructed through language. Furthermore, FDA also shares the epistemological position with other forms of discourse analysis in that we are not seeking to uncover a stable reality, or truth, of the social world we study. Yet Willig also notes that in some forms, FDA can take a more realist position with respect to epistemology, through its exploration of how particular discourses are made available in the specific conditions from which they are generated.

With my interest in the influence of social constructionist thinking on systemic practice in educational psychology, my epistemological position in relation to the focus of this research, the relationship between EPs and CYP in the context of systemic change, is very clearly situated in a social constructionist framework. With respect to ontology, I am interested in how the social context of that relationship, perhaps specifically SEND systems, defines the discourses available to those constructing the relationship. Yet I do not understand those systems to be immutable and in that sense, I maintain a social constructionist ontological position as well, although I acknowledge that this may be a form of “weak” (Harper, 2012, p. 91) social constructionism.

## 3.3 Focus Group Rationale

As Wilkinson (1998) notes, focus groups conducted in a “social constructionist epistemological framework” provide the opportunity for “collective sense-making” (p. 146). Given my interest in CYPs’ collective voice, focus groups were an appropriate means of data collection. I was interested in providing a space for group discussion and viewed it as an opportunity to explore the construction of the relationship between EPs and CYP.

The focus group design is based around three focus groups, one with only EPs, one with only young people (YP), and one joint group that brought the separate groups together. This tripartite model was designed to facilitate an opportunity for the separate groups to meet for the first time. As Kitzinger (1994) notes focus groups are not just a way of interviewing more than one person at a time but an opportunity to explore the interactions between participants. I am using discourse analysis to study the construction of the relationship between the two groups as well as the process of the groups coming together, which I consider a negotiation. Whilst the first two groups contained talk of the relationship, the final group was also an opportunity for the two groups to enter into dialogue for the first time. The structure provided the opportunity to look at the constructions in separate and then a joint group, exploring connections and developments. It was not an experiment to compare the constructions. Rather, it was designed as research informed by action research principles, which I have explored further below.

In contrast perhaps to other forms of qualitative research such as some uses of thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017), by using discourse analysis the focus groups were not designed as an opportunity to gather views but rather, as Kitzinger (1994) indicates, formed part of the process of research. Although the discussion in the focus groups was not always focused on the topic of the relationship between EPs and CYP, I was interested in how that relationship featured and was constructed in a wider discussion about their respective activity in shared local SEND systems.

Both the young people and the EPs were in pre-existing groups (the young people were all part of the same youth group and EPs all part of the same EP service team). As Kitzinger (1994) notes, participants being in groups with people they know creates an opportunity for them to relate the discussion back to their real lives. Building on this, I considered the shared experiences as a point of contact which could support the shared meaning-making of the relationships.

I was conscious of my role in the focus groups and understood that I was acting as a facilitator, providing some structure to the discussion, supporting participants to unpack ideas, or ensuring different people had an opportunity to speak.

**Reflective box**

I felt uncomfortable in the facilitator role at times, and I was conscious of thoughts about not wanting to influence the discussion too much through my interactions with participants. I understood these thoughts as relating to the impact of an emphasis in my undergraduate psychology training on the experimental method. On reflection, I acknowledge the epistemological position I am taking and my role as researcher being part of the research process, in which case my interactions are a valid part of the process.

## 3.4 Participatory Approach

Given the focus of this research, it was appropriate to consider the levels of participation in the project. It was also important to consider the research practitioner role of the educational psychologist; I aimed to position this project as a reflection of that role and drew on literature relating to participatory research as applied in practice (Wallace and Giles, 2019).

I provided opportunities for participants to be involved in the planning, delivery, analysis and dissemination of the project (with the dissemination element of the research still to be delivered). In planning the work however, I noted that the potential for participation in the project was already diluted by the university ethics process, where a detailed research proposal was required before direct contact could be made with potential participants thus precluding their involvement in the design of the project. Considering this, I drew on Franks’ (2011) concept of Pockets of Participation. Franks argues that in the context of funded research, it is often necessary to design research before recruiting participants to secure funding, and in doing so, the participatory nature of the research is affected. Franks goes on to argue that it is helpful to consider the various opportunities for participation in a research project. I also noted my cautiousness as a relatively inexperienced researcher planning to conduct FDA for the first time, in being able to support others and collaborate effectively using that method of analysis. I understand some models of participation, such as Hart’s (1992) ladder of participation, to present participation as a stepped approach suggesting being higher up the ladder can be seen as ‘better’ or more meaningful for participants. In contrast, I considered Wallace and Giles’s (2019) argument that participatory research does not refer to one particular method, instead referring to an approach which involves participants.

In approaching my research, I took the perspective that each participant might have different levels and types of involvement, depending on their views and needs, and that each of these experiences are equally valuable.

## 3.5 Action Research

As we search for practical knowledge and liberating ways of knowing, working with people in their everyday lives, we can also see that action research is participative research, and all participative research must be action research.

(Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p4)

The strong participatory element of action research as Reason and Bradbury (2008) note, means it is useful positioning for this project. I am also conscious of how my interest in liberatory thinking in both education and psychology extends into action research (Kagan et al., 2017). Furthermore, as this thesis considers the impact of relationship construction on EP systemic practice, I am also drawn by the emphasis on practice in action research approaches, as noted by Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2017).

Action research, as outlined by Kagan et al. (2017), is formed of cycles of research, which constitute the development of ideas, planning, taking action, evaluation and reflection, all done in partnership with participants. I understood this research as fulfilling one full revolution of the action research cycle. Initially facilitating separate focus groups for CYP and EPs provided an opportunity for the two groups to reflect on their work and its connection to the others’ work. At the end of each separate group, I suggested to participants they took the opportunity to plan what they would like to share with the other group, so this constituted the planning element. I understood the meeting of the two groups and the dialogue produced as a form of action and part of a potential process of change. Finally, I considered the opportunity to reflect on the results of the research as the reflection aspect. I elaborate further on these aspects of the design in the Research Design chapter.

I acknowledge however, that whilst I was interested in action research as a way of approaching the research, it was not an explicit intention, rather it was implicit as part of discourse analysis. As Parker (1992) notes:

Discourse analysis should become a variety of action research, in which the internal system of any discourse and its relation to others is challenged. It alters, and so permits different spaces for manoeuvre and resistance.

(Parker, 1992, p. 21)

I was interested in the research as a study of the process of the EPs and YP coming together, with a focus on discourse as a means of analysing and making sense of how the relationship was constructed across that process. It was the process of the groups coming into dialogue together that I felt most constituted the action element. I thought it was important to be clear about the fact that I was not asking participants to plan a piece of work together, rather simply meet and talk on one occasion. For this reason, I did not describe the project as action research, yet for the purposes of the way I understood the process of them coming together, I have outlined the relevance of an action research approach to the project.

**Reflective Box**

In some respects, I felt the project design was limited by not including the opportunity for the young people and EPs to take action together. I was concerned that it did not align well with the inspiration for the research, which was my very practical previous experience of working alongside CYP to create change in our shared systems. Furthermore, as I have reflected on elsewhere, it felt important to make sure that the participants understood that the project was not an opportunity to take action together. However, I was also aware that the design was restricted by the context in which I was working, where the groups of YP and EPs had no previous experience of working together in this way. I believed from both ethical and practical perspectives that it would be beneficial to design a process which supported their coming together. Given the lack of previous contact between the groups I wanted to ensure that their first experience of linking up was successful, so I did not want to create a research design where that linking process was rushed or pressured by my need to complete the project within the timescales of my thesis requirements. I was also inspired by my knowledge of school linking projects such as The Linking Network (The Linking Network, 2023), where the act of coming together and sharing experiences is one part of wider work to build understanding between diverse school communities. I felt my concerns about the limitation of the research design were resolved by considering the research as one initial step in part of a potentially much wider piece of work. This wider work could support communities of CYP and EPs to act together following developing an understanding of their commonalities and differences within shared systems. I understood that work as being something that could continue beyond the end of this specific project.

# Chapter 4: Research design

## 4.1 Pilot Study

As I had planned in a layer of participation to the design of the focus group prompts, I decided not to pilot the focus groups, although on reflection I think this would have been a useful reflective exercise for myself. The experience of facilitating the first focus group prompted me to reflect on my role as researcher in discourse analysis research and a pilot study would have allowed me to utilise that reflection more productively in the first focus group.

I did, however, distribute recruitment materials to a small group of young people with SEND through a professional contact in another local authority. Feedback suggested it would be helpful to simplify the information about the project. I subsequently adapted the design of recruitment materials into accessible formats, as detailed below.

## 4.2 Recruitment

### 4.2.1 Sampling

I recruited participants using purposive sampling of young people active in a SEND youth action group and EPs from the same LA. The criteria for recruitment is outlined in Table 1. I determined sample size through an interest in allowing everybody an opportunity to contribute and support a productive discussion (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I deliberately recruited more YP than EPs to address any potential power imbalance between the groups.

**Table 1**

*Criteria for Participant Recruitment*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **YP** | **EPs** |
| Between 11 and 25 years old | Worked in the local authority 3+ months (I had at first stipulated 6+ months as I had originally intended to recruit in September and I wanted to ensure any newly qualified EPs had enough experience of working in this particular LA. Recruitment started later than I intended though and I considered that at least 3 months experience was sufficient). |
| Group member 6+ months |
| Parental consent required for participants under 18 years. |

### 4.2.2 Recruitment Procedure

Recruitment for both groups consisted of providing information verbally at respective team or youth group meetings, followed up with printed information for all potential participants and the distribution of consent forms (full details of the recruitment procedure is provided in Appendix A, with details of the information sheets and consent forms for participants in Appendices B, C, D, E, F, G, H, and I). Reflecting on the feedback from the SEND youth group who reviewed my recruitment materials, I also provided a PowerPoint with voiceover in order to increase the accessibility of the information.

My access to the youth group was organised through contact with a professional who had an existing relationship with the group. I was conscious of the gatekeeper role this professional had in negotiating my access to the young people. This raised my awareness at an early stage of the possibility that EPs’ relationship with CYP is mediated by other professionals’ roles and relationships with those CYP. I have presented demographic information regarding recruited participants in Table 2.

Potential participants contacted me by email, or via the youth group professional contact, to indicate their interest in taking part. I then held individual meetings with each potential participant to ensure they had accessed all the information about the project and to provide them with the opportunity to ask questions. I used a mixture of face-to-face and online methods for these individual meetings, depending on Covid-19 restrictions at the time.

**Table 2**

*Demographic Information Regarding Participants*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Recruited participants** | |
| **4 youth participants**  Ages 18-25  2 male, 2 female  2 in employment, 2 not in employment, education or training. | **3 EP participants**  3 female  One newly qualified, one in second year of employment, one in more senior role. |

## 4.3 Focus Group Procedures

I held the first focus group, with EPs, through an online video meeting because of the Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time. I was conscious of the barriers online meetings can present, such as internet connectivity, access to technology and a need to be proficient with technology (Tuttas, 2015) but it seemed important to be able to offer a clear plan for meeting, which the unpredictability of Covid restrictions did not allow when organising in-person meetings. I used an online focus group meeting, rather than other online methods such as real-time forums (Fox, 2017), as I felt this mirrored a face-to-face meeting and as Tuttas (2015) notes, it is useful in terms of allowing facilitator interaction.

One of the youth participants requested that we meet face-to-face for the focus groups. At this time, national Covid-19 restrictions were easing, so I submitted an amendment to the ethical review for the project to allow for face-to-face meetings, which was approved. Further consent was gained from all participants to meet face-to-face.

The third (joint) focus group was designed to be attended by all of the participants from the separate focus groups but one of the EPs was unable to attend this group due to unexpected circumstances on the day.

For the first two groups, participants had the opportunity to influence the design of the research by taking part in a preliminary discussion to discuss what topics would be useful to cover in the discussion. No participants opted to take part in this, so I emailed them the broad topics that I planned to raise in the focus groups (Figures 1 and 2), with an invitation to send suggestions for amendments or additions (full details of the questions I prepared for all three focus groups can be found in Appendix J). None of the participants responded with any suggested changes. At the end of focus groups one and two, participants recorded some questions/thoughts they wanted to ask/share with the other group in focus group three (details of these can be found in Appendix K).

**Reflective Box**

Considering that I approached this as a piece of participatory research, I was disappointed at this stage that the participants were not engaging more with the opportunities to get involved in the design and direction of the research (and I suppose, engage with me as well). I felt as if my thoughts and interests were the main determinant of the research topic and structure, which seemed a tension given my interest in collaboration. I reflect in more detail in my Analysis and Interpretation about the importance of the process of the EPs and YP getting to know each other, before starting to plan or take action together, and I understand my experience in the research process as a reflection of that.

**Figure 1**

*Focus Group Topics Distributed to EPs in Advance of Focus Group*

* EP work relating to SEND systems
* EPs' collaborative work with young people
* EP practice which engages with groups, or communities, of young people, in effecting systems change.
* Discussing the EP role in relation to collaborative systems level work with young people.
* What of our discussion might you want to share with the young people in the next focus group? How would you like to communicate this?

**Figure 2**

*Focus Group Prompts Emailed to YP*

* What being in this group is like
* Being involved in making changes to SEND systems
* Working with other people, including educational psychologists
* What educational psychologists do
* Educational psychologists' work with SEND systems
* Planning your conversation with the educational psychologists in the next group

The third focus group was a facilitated meeting of the two groups and utilised the questions/prompts prepared by the separate groups, as well as a loose structure based around prompts from myself. Figure 3 summarises that structure and Table 3 outlines my rationale for including the factors incorporated to address any potential power imbalances between the EPs and CYP.

**Figure 3**

*Structure for Joint Focus Group Discussion*

* Young people to tell EPs about what they do in their group.
* EPs to tell young people about what they do in their work.
* A chance for everyone to ask questions of each other, based on what has been said already, or just interest.
* A chance everyone to talk about what it would be like for EPs and groups of young people to work together to make changes to SEND systems.

**Table 3**

*Prompts and Key Factors Considered to Address Potential Power Imbalances*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Prompts and key factors of focus groups** | **Reasoning** |
| YP’s focus group met at their usual venue | Supporting YP to feel at ease. |
| Familiar staff members available for YP | A support mechanism. |
| Adapting use of language such as ‘discussion group’ instead of ‘focus group’. | To aid accessibility. |
| Joint group held at their usual venue at the time of their usual youth group. | YPs’ suggestion and to support EPs to step into YPs’ world. |
| Ice-breaker questions to start discussions. | To encourage interactions *between* participants.  To support EPs and YP to get to know each other at the beginning of the group. |
| Setting ground rules (see Appendix L) in collaboration with participants at the beginning of focus groups. | To support participants to feel at ease.  To support the discussion.  To support confidentiality. |
| Structuring discussions around key questions/prompts. | To provide shape to a natural discussion between participants. |
| Delivering questions/prompts conversationally | To allow flow from one conversation to the next. |
| Replacing terms such as ‘participation’ or ‘coproduction’ with descriptive terms such as ‘taking part’ or ‘working with’ | To give participants space to bring meaning to the discussion. |
| Future oriented question | Reflecting my interest in systemic practice this drew on the types of questions used in Family Therapy, specifically questions which introduce time-based perspectives, as Penn (1985) discusses. |
| Asking participants in first two focus groups what they want to share with others in third group and recording this on a Jamboard (digital whiteboard) or flipchart. | To provide structure to the third focus group, which participants have had an opportunity to co-design. |

## 4.4 Analytical Framework and Procedure

I used FDA as an approach to analysing the transcripts of the focus group discussions, with the purpose of exploring how the relationship is constructed in talk by the EPs and YP, and how these constructions open or close the opportunity for collaboration. The “discursive object” (Willig, 2013, p. 131), or the focus of the analysis, was the relationship between EPs and YP in the context of systemic change.

As indicated earlier, there is no single method to FDA and the nature of the approach does not align with a formula or specified method (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2017). There are some guidelines, or loose frameworks proposed, such as the six stages proposed by Willig (2013), or Parker’s (1992) 20 steps. The procedure I followed draws on both those sources. I have provided a summary of Willig’s six stages in Table 4 and a summary of Parker’s 20 steps in Appendix M. I have provided a fuller account of the analytic procedure below.

Willig (2013) describes her six stages as a means for the researcher to establish the discursive resources being used in the text and to consider the subject positions being taken. These initial stages of the analysis then allow the researcher to explore the, “implications for subjectivity and practice” (Willig, 2013, p. 131). Willig proposes that the six stages she describes, are an appropriate, “way in” (Willig, 2013, p. 137) to FDA, which was useful for me, not having previously carried out FDA.

Willig (2013) is also very clear that whilst her six stage framework for analysis draws on a Foucauldian tradition, it does not constitute a full Foucauldian analysis as it does not include a historical perspective. Given my interest in the historical context of the EP role and how that impacts on the relationship with YP, I was keen to locate my analysis from that perspective. I have not carried out a genealogical study informed by Foucault’s ideas about tracing the development of discourses through history, such as Rose’s (1979) exploration of the idea of intelligence measurement to understand the history and practice of psychology in England. I have, however, used my interpretation of the first six stages of the analysis as a means of locating my understanding within the social, policy and economic context of the EP role, drawing on Parker’s (1992) 20 steps. In my interpretation I explored the identified discursive constructions and discourses in the context of wider literature regarding educational psychology practice and CYPs’ action.

### 4.4.1 Summary Description of Analytic Procedure

**Table 4**

*Summary of Willig’s (2013) Six Stages*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage** | **Procedure** |
| Stage one: Discursive constructions | * Identify the use of the discursive object (the relationship). * Consider links and differences in the use of discursive object, to identify the discursive constructions of the object. |
| Stage two: Wider discourses | Locate discursive constructions in wider discourses. |
| Stage three: Action orientation | Consider what the discursive constructions achieve. |
| Stage four: Positionings | How do the discursive constructions impact on the subject positions? |
| Stage five: Practice | What is the implication on practice from being in these subject positions? |
| Stage six: Subjectivity | Consider the potential thoughts and feelings possible in these subject positions. |

After I had carried out the above procedure for each transcript, I went on to consider how the use of the discursive constructions changed across the groups, as the groups prepared to meet, and then met in the final group.

### 4.4.2 Detailed Description of Analytic Procedure

Following my transcription of each focus group, I went through each transcript and highlighted the discursive object, the relationship between EPs and YP. I noted both explicit references to the relationship, as well as implicit, also noting sections where the discursive object was absent. My focus on the absent sections was partly driven by my thoughts and feelings as I conducted the focus groups and read through the transcript, which I captured in my research diary (Appendix N). Fuller consideration is given to this in the Analysis and Interpretation chapter, but it is worth noting that this stage of the analysis was an opportunity to use reflexivity as part of the process (McCabe & Holmes, 2009) and as such I drew on my thoughts and feelings as a data source. I have noted in my outline of FDA the way in which I position myself as an author in the process of this research. As Burman and Parker (1993) note, reflexivity has a role in discourse analysis, in making the process of interpretation transparent. I have attempted to deliver this transparency through the use of reflective boxes which provide an insight into how I drew on my own experience of the research in the analysis.

I went on to label each occurrence of the discursive object, using a free association process. Although I was not trying to theme or group the labels at this point, I was noticing in what context the object was being used and times and places where there were links or differences between the objects.

In the next stage of my analysis, I continued to work with each transcript separately, seeking to identify the discursive constructions in the transcript, or how the relationship was being constructed. I experienced this as a new reading of the transcripts where I was looking for connections, contrasts and contradictions in the way the discursive object was being used. I went through the process several times, each time reading the quotes and surrounding text in new ways.

I found that the examples did not fall into neatly delineated constructions, and I sometimes included examples of the discursive object under more than one construction. This felt a messy and frustrating process and I was conscious of resisting my pull to create a neat version of the text that somehow represented an objective truth. In my resistance I tried to embrace the incoherence and stay focused on what I was noticing, letting that lead me through. In doing so I hope that I was allowing myself to be a part of the process rather than an objective observer, again considering the reflexive nature of qualitative research (Willig, 2013).

During the process of doing this for each transcript, I was naturally noticing connections and differences between the transcripts as well. Although I did not set out to identify discursive constructions which applied across different texts, I did note places where there were similarities, and this is reflected in my findings.

The joint focus group offered an opportunity for the EPs and YP to engage in dialogue. Considering this, I have interpreted the discursive constructions of the relationship not just in reference to the implicit and explicit talk of the relationship as an object, but also in the way the relationship is constructed through the language used to actively relate to each other in dialogue.

Up to this point I was using Stages One and Two of Willig’s (2013) six stages as a guide, however I recognise that I was also holding my research interests in mind in the analytic process. Throughout the above process I was considering the wider discourses that each example of the discursive object drew upon, but it was only following these initial readings of the texts that I attempted to label the discourses. Once I had identified the discourses, I went on to use Stages Three to Six to analyse how each discursive construction was being used to construct the relationship.

Carrying out Stages Three to Six with each construction highlighted how the use of discursive constructions opened and closed the opportunities for collaboration between EPs and YP, and I began noting the connections and differences in how that happened in each text. The analytic procedure for the joint focus group reflected my understanding of this as a distinct discursive event, where the two groups were meeting for the first time and entering into dialogue. I was particularly interested in what was happening through the focus group and how the use of discursive constructions changed. Therefore, as with the previous focus groups, I used Willig’s (2013) Six Stages to analyse which discursive constructions were being used and to what effect, but I also studied the movement of discourses, considering how they changed across the focus group.

I understood the movement of discourses as a form of group dynamics, which I first became aware of through my personal reflections noted in the moment as well as afterwards in my research diary (see Appendix N); these became a valuable source of data as well.

In the interpretation of the analysis, I considered the findings from the analysis so far and interpreted them within the context of policy, academic and practice contexts relating to educational psychology and YPs’ action. In this stage I was drawing on steps 15 to 20 of Parker’s (1992) 20 steps, which he notes can “make the analysis politically useful” (p.17). In these steps, Parker suggests that we can consider how institutions can be made stronger or undermined by the use of different discourses. Furthermore, the steps prompt us to explore how groups of people benefit or not when discourses are used. Parker encourages analysts to explore how discourses link to others which “sanction oppression” (p. 20). Finally, he suggests we can show how some discourses are used by more influential groups to tell stories about what has happened in the past to validate what is happening in the present, whilst stopping others from impacting on history by using alternative discourses.

## 4.5 Research Diary

I kept a research diary which functioned as a reflective tool throughout the research and have used those reflections to inform the development of my thesis. Whilst I note that I am positioning myself as inside the research and therefore acknowledge my impact on the data, the reflective diary provides some insight into my decision-making. A selection of diary entries is included in Appendix N.

## 4.6 Transcription

I recorded the online focus group discussion with Google Meet recording and face-to-face meetings with a portable audio recorder. I transcribed the recordings using Kaltura voice recognition software, which I refined with repeated listening.

When deciding on what features to include in the transcription, I considered practical issues, as Mischler (1991) suggests, such as line numbers and time markers for reference. I also indicated where speech was unclear and the two occasions when we were interrupted by outside visitors. I decided not to include social talk at the beginning and end of the recording, as I did not consider it in the meaning I made of the text. I also considered anonymity by removing some portions of the text that included identifying or very personal details about participants.

Bailey (2008) notes that transcribing is an act of interpretation and certainly my decision-making about transcription features to include actively reflected my interpretation of the conversations. For instance, I included overlaps between speakers to represent the high energy levels I was experiencing in the conversation; laughing to indicate the intent of some speech; long pauses to indicate cautiousness, confusion, or thoughtfulness on the part of the participant. I also indicated strongly accented words, to reflect cultural identities in the text. As a piece of qualitative research, locating the text in a specific time and place was appropriate (it is not intended as a piece of work with generalisable data).

A key to the transcription features is included with the transcripts in Appendices O, P and Q. I drew on the literature referenced above, as well as Jefferson (1978) as a source for notation methods, although I adapted these into a simple form.

## 4.7 Quality: Apprenticeship, Scholarship and Innovation

As Searle (2010) notes, transposing the language and concepts of what constitutes quality in research from quantitative to qualitative methods is problematic as it ignores the paradigmatic differences between the approaches. Whilst I acknowledge Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) argument that taking a social constructionist approach might discourage us from seeking fixed criteria for judging the quality of research, I explored literature which addressed how to move beyond criteria such as reliability and validity used in quantitative research. Researchers take a variety of positions on this issue and I felt Parker (2004) was particularly relevant given his specific focus on psychology.

Parker (2004) suggests that the “principles of ‘apprenticeship’, ‘scholarship’ and ‘innovation’” (p. 95) provide a guide by which we can judge research. I understand the principles as being on a continuum, where as a researcher I am encouraged to frame my work in the traditions and methods in the field of psychology, such as “apprenticeship” (p. 104), whilst also building an argument in order to critique that knowledge base, which Parker calls “scholarship” (p. 104). He suggests we can stretch the limits of existing ideas through “innovation” (p. 104). I focus below on how my research integrates these standards.

I conceive Parker’s ideas almost as meta principles and note that there are others interwoven into qualitative methodologies, such as subjectivity, reflexivity and considering the role of participants in the research. I have addressed these throughout the thesis whilst also reflecting on times when these principles have been challenged by the events of the research.

### 4.7.1 Apprenticeship

Parker (2004) suggests that it is important that in research we can reference the previous knowledge base we are drawing upon. This research has its roots in questions about educational psychology and the shift from a positivist position to more qualitative perspectives, yet I remain interested in the history of the profession and the continuing impact of that history on the role today. Whilst using a qualitative methodology I have attempted to remain curious about psychology’s relationship with positivism in order to understand the impact on EP practice, in the context of the relationship with CYP.

### 4.7.2 Scholarship

I also recognise the value of my outsider perspective at the beginning of the work in allowing me to ask fresh questions of what might be established traditions or truths in educational psychology. I have sought to draw on the existing literature to consider how the qualitative paradigm in psychology opens the conditions for collaboration between EPs and CYP, yet I have also been keen to highlight what the existing knowledge base does not address, with specific reference to the application of that collaboration beyond individual CYPs’ stories and at organisational system change level.

In proposing this research, I made a commitment to moving beyond my informal observations, conversations and reflections, into a thorough and critical exploration of the topic. Although I found scant literature which explicitly discussed my specific interest, I attempted to build quality into the research by considering a range of associated areas of literature to ensure I had explored all potential perspectives on this subject.

### 4.7.3 Innovation

As explored earlier, I have made the case for using FDA and despite the reassuring temptation to work closely in line with Willig’s (2013) six stages I recognised that this step-by-step approach to analysis does not draw on historical perspectives. Considering the way the topic is rooted in the story of EPs’ journey through different paradigms, it felt important to bring that in and I have sought to bring depth to the research by challenging myself to work outside the confines of any prescribed method. I have had to sit in the uncomfortable position of feeling like I don’t know what I am doing in order to bring that level of depth to the research, so (hopefully) impacting positively on the quality.

As noted in the introduction, I have been conscious of the philosophical journey I have made between Freire’s (1996) ideas based on structural oppression and the social constructionist, post-structural perspective I have predominantly explored in the research. I thought at times that I should perhaps abandon the project because of the potential philosophical incompatibility of the two areas of thought, but on reflection I feel it would be an example of ‘methodolatory’ (Reicher, 2000) to stop exploring and asking questions just because this does not fit a specific methodology. Considering Parker’s ideas about innovation, I think by showing an awareness of the contrast between professional practice founded on different philosophies, yet still exploring the connection between the two, I have attempted to work innovatively.

## 4.8 Ethical Considerations

As I was recruiting youth participants with SEND and I did not yet know their specific needs, I reflected on their capacity to consent to take part. Considering guidance from the British Psychological Society [BPS] (BPS, 2020), I put in place measures which reflected the statutory principles of the Mental Capacity Act [MCA] (2005), as interpreted by the BPS. The first three of these steps are to assume participants’ capacity to consent, provide information about the project and ask for consent, after which point the participant can agree to take part or not. Testing out the accessibility of the recruitment materials was designed to support this process and providing materials in an alternative format following this (PowerPoint with voiceover and electronic consent) was a useful amendment. I also kept the principles in mind whilst conducting the individual interviews with the potential participants and assumed capacity to consent. Following the interviews I determined that no further action was required in order to support their understanding of what it meant to take part. Wendler and Rackoff (2002) suggest that gaining consent from participants is an ongoing process in research and considering this, I provided opportunities throughout the research for participants to ask questions about what was involved at that stage, and to verbally consent to continue taking part. Given that the research was focused on exploring opportunities for CYP with SEND to take part in processes which might create change, it was an important feature of the research to ensure that I was embracing the stance of the first principle of the MCA and assuming their capacity to consent.

It was also important to be clear with the participants about the limits of the project. The research had a strong focus on the *idea* of potential collaboration between the EPs and YP. I did not aim to put into action any *actual* future collaboration and I was concerned that this could be confusing for participants. I dealt with this by reiterating at regular intervals to participants the purpose and scope of the research.

The research also had a focus on the way power is embodied in the relationship between EPs and CYP and I put measures in place to ensure that this too was addressed in the research design, such as in the balance of number of EPs to YP (as discussed earlier). For instance, when planning the numbers in each focus group, I addressed what I consider to be the historical power imbalance between the two groups by having more young people present than EPs.

# Chapter 5: Analysis

In the following chapter I present my analysis of the transcripts of EPs and YP talking about their work in SEND systems, framed within a process of actors in local SEND systems meeting for the first time. The analysis aims to explore how participants talk about their relationship in the context of systemic change, and how that opens or closes possibilities for collaboration.

As noted in the methodology, I analysed the data from the three focus groups separately as, although connected, they stand alone in terms of discursive events. However, I have framed this research from the beginning as a meeting of two groups who do not already know one another. To reflect this, I have used the analysis as a means of exploring to what effect the groups use the available discourses across the process of coming together. This includes the joint group where the EPs and CYP are in dialogue. I have therefore presented the analysis under the headings of the discursive constructions as this allowed me to provide a commentary of the varying uses of the constructions across the three groups. Where I have referred to the name of the discursive construction, I have put it in italics. A copy of the transcripts from each focus group is provided in Appendices O, P and Q.

When describing the discursive constructions, I have used quotes to illustrate examples and have indicated their location in the transcripts with the notation FG#LN#, referring to the focus group number and line number(s). Table 4 outlines the number of each focus group. The notation for the transcripts and extracts is presented in Table 5.

**Table 4**

*Focus Group Numbers*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Focus group** | **Focus group number** |
| EPs’ group | Focus group 1 |
| YPs’ group | Focus group 2 |
| Joint group | Focus group 3 |

**Table 5**

*Notation for Transcripts and Extracts*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Symbol | Explanation |
| { | Overlap in conversational turns indicated by left hand bracket |
| [?text] | Unclear speech (where transcription may be inaccurate) |
| [?] | Small segment of inaudible text |
| [????] | Longer segment of inaudible text |
| [laugh] | Information on non-linguistic features, like laughing |
| ... | Long pause (longer than 4 seconds) |
| [*italicised text*] | Text which has been changed to ensure anonymity |
| (INTERRUPTION) | Interruption (where transcript stopped/started) |
| (…SECTION REMOVED…) | Small section of text removed to protect confidentiality of participant |

In summary, I have identified three discursive constructions in the texts, where the relationship is constructed as *unestablished*, a *service*, and as *a partnership*. Under the headings of these three discursive constructions, I have presented my analysis using Willig’s (2013) Six Stages, as described in the Research Design. In order to avoid repetition and demonstrate the complexity of the analysis I have integrated the six stages for each discursive construction. So, under each heading I have explained the connections I have made of the different uses of the discursive object (the relationship between EPs and YP) to identify the three discursive constructions (Stage One). With reference to Stage Two I have provided a brief reference to my reading of how each construction is located within wider discourses and have highlighted this in bold. I provide a fuller interpretation of the use of the wider discourses in the Further Interpretation and Discussion chapter. I use the final four stages of the analysis to explore, with respect to each construction, the function of its use (Stage Three), the subject positions taken (Stage Four), the possibilities for practice (Stage Five), and my understanding of the subjective experience of participants (Stage Six). By working through these six stages, I present my understanding of how the different discursive constructions are used in ways which variously open, or close, opportunities for collaboration between EPs and CYP in the context of systemic change.

I am conscious however, that this integrated approach perhaps obscures the fact that I did not set out to find discursive constructions which spanned all three transcripts; in fact, I had expected to find different sets of constructions for each transcript. To add a further layer of transparency, I begin with a detailed snapshot of one part of the process and content of the analysis, with a particular focus on Stage One for the EP focus group. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the “trustworthiness” (p. 290) of qualitative research can be established through consideration of four criteria, “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability” (p. 300). In providing more detail of one part of the analysis I seek to bolster the “dependability” of the research by providing more evidence of my decision-making process.

As Willig (2013) suggests, the analysis naturally integrates some interpretation, as might traditionally be presented in a discussion section of a research report. I have, however, also considered elements of Parker’s (1992) 20 steps to stretch the analysis beyond the guidance of Willig’s stages and considered how the use of discourses in this study relate to the policy, academic and practice context in which EPs work and YP take action. I have presented this in a separate Further Interpretation and Discussion chapter. In line with the participative aims of the research I also present my discussion regarding the findings with participants.

I have summarised the connections I have made between the different stages of the analysis and provided this in Table 6 in Appendix R.

## 5.1 Detailed Snapshot of Stage One of the EP Focus Group Analysis

I went through the transcript of the EP focus group highlighting and labelling each use of the discursive object (the relationship), also making a note of my thoughts and reflections, as the extract below exemplifies. Labels related to both explicit and implicit uses of the object. In the extract the highlighted text shows where I identified the use of the object, and the bold capitalised text are the initial labels I ascribed to the way the object was being used.

EP1: Do? I don't know whether, in terms of, you know, So I was thinking about doing multi element planning with, like a staff team. And very often what happens in in those situations is it's often less about the resources in the school. It's often about the dynamic and the relational aspects of that happening around the child and developing a shared understanding and, em, actually modelling a way of communicating with each other, where there are kind of quite disparate views about what a child's needs are. **DETECTIVE, TALKING ABOUT AN IND CHILD WITH OTHERS, WORKING WITH OTHERS ON IND CHILD’S BEHALF** So I'm not. I did it a lot more in my previous role, but I found that really helpful to sort of get where you can get good participation, a whole kind of secondary team and all your subject around a kid and and work on that that system of adults around them. **WORKING WITH OTHERS ON IND CHILD’S BEHALF, AT A DISTANCE,**

(Annotated Extract, FG1, LN83-91)

In this initial reading of the text I was considering issues addressed in my literature review, such as contrasting foci of individuals and groups of CYP, but I was also struck by particular ways in which the EPs talked about the relationship. I noticed that they were often talking about the relationship with respect to examples where CYP were not present, as if there was something important about the responsibility of working on behalf of CYP. Equally they seemed to place as much importance on the times when they were able to work directly with CYP. At this early stage I was conscious of beginning to already consider the subsequent stages of the analysis, such as thinking about how the EPs positioned themselves in relation to CYP, or their feelings about the relationship. Whilst I was tempted to move quickly into these latter stages of the analysis, I was aware that my labelling sometimes felt like a free association process and I wanted to ensure that the analysis was based on a thorough consideration of all the different uses of the discursive object, rather than those that stood out most quickly. I therefore went through a process of collecting all of the uses of discursive object in one place (the labels from these are noted in Appendix S). As I read and re-read the transcripts I made a note of new labels based on different ways of reading the text and made a note of my thoughts and my perception of connections between the use of each quote in different contexts.

By the end of the analysis of Stage One of the EP focus group I understood the EPs as constructing the relationship in four distinct ways. I understood the EPs to be talking about the relationship as something in which they were working on behalf of the YP, which included distinct functions such as hearing and representing YPs’ voices. I was also considering times when the EPs seemed to feel there were barriers in the way of their relationship with YP, as well as examples where the relationship did not seem very strong. I was unsure how to name this and gave it a tentative name of Weak/Thin/Lacking/Distanced. Yet there were also times when the EPs seemed to experience the relationship as a form of connection with YP, even though that was at times an imagined, or hoped for connection. The full list of labels organised under different headings of discursive constructions is in Appendix T.

As I went on to do the analysis for the YPs’ and the joint focus group, I began to reflect on the differences and connections in how the relationship was talked about in the different groups. The impact of this additional reading of the text prompted me to re-consider how I understood the discursive constructions in use in the EP focus group. I began to understand the lack of connection between the groups I had already noted in the EP focus group (under the headings of Blocked, as well as Weak/Thin/Lacking/Distanced), as both being specific versions of the relationship as unestablished, which could also apply to the other groups. For the EP group, I therefore brought those two constructions under the *unestablished* discursive construction title, which applied across all three groups. At this stage I also changed the titles of the other constructions to the final versions which I felt were broad enough to capture the richness of the varied uses of each construction across the three focus groups. The photograph below shows how I drew together my understanding of the use of the different constructions in the different groups.

**A piece of paper with writing on it

Description automatically generated**

**Reflective Box**

The analysis of the data took a lot longer than I expected, particularly with respect to Stage One and I have been interested to reflect on that in terms of my journey with the research.

The process of carrying out this research has undoubtedly been affected by the context of carrying it out during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic had a very immediate impact on the research process, where I had to change the timeline of the research in order to accommodate the changes I needed to make at a personal level to home educate my three young children. I had to take a break from the thesis and I therefore began carrying out the analysis of the data at a time when many of my peers were completing their studies. The lack of structure and learning community which came at that time were destabilising and I found it difficult to maintain momentum. I was lucky enough to be offered employment with an EP service despite not having completed my thesis but this too added to the pressure on me, learning to juggle an increase in my workload whilst completing the data analysis.

Yet even discounting the impact of Covid-19, the length of time it took to carry out the analysis also reflects my experience of the significant shifts in my thinking that occurred across the analysis process, prompted by the meaning I was making of the data. I was conscious of the influence of the frameworks with which I had approached my work with CYP in the past and the potential for this to impact on my interpretation of the data. Whilst I was open to new perspectives, I was surprised by the new insights I gained into the relationship between CYP and EPs and I feel this only came through a thorough and multi-layered approach to the analysis. I saw the influence of my established frameworks in the early stages of the analysis and was worried that I was taking a tautological route through my research. It was gratifying to find that a persistent and curious approach allowed for the possibility of new insights. This took time however, and I found it affirming to read (Willig, 2013) that it is not unusual for discourse analysis to take a long time to complete.

## 5.2 Relationship as *Unestablished*

The YPs’ focus group begins with a long discussion about the YPs’ interactions with decision-makers in SEND systems where no mention is made of the relationship with EPs, either explicitly or implicitly. This suggests to me that at this point, the YP do not construct the relationship with EPs as one in which they might collaborate in taking action in systems and is a very clear example of the relationship being *unestablished.*

**Reflective Box**

At this beginning stage of facilitating the YPs’ focus group I felt worried that the whole discussion might not include any mention of EPs (and that this might mean we had no data!). On reflection, I decided the absence was itself a significant finding, especially considering that in this initial section, the YP talked about their work with “decision makers” (FG2, LN21) specifically with reference to SEND systems. In this part of the text, it appears EPs are absent from YPs’ experiences, and there is no relationship, not even imagined or wished for.

I make connections, however, between this absence, with other times across all three focus groups, when the relationship is talked about more explicitly as somehow lacking, weak, or distanced.

As a first example, in the YPs’ group, they explicitly note that this is the first opportunity they have had to work with EPs, suggesting that the relationship is not yet formed:

YP4: This is our first one in’t it? Like we've never got given this opportunity before

(FG2, LN607)

I also note in the YPs’ focus group that the YP express uncertainty about the possibility that EPs might already work with YP in the context of youth voice work, so suggesting a gap between YPs’ and EPs’ experiences. This is again reflected in the joint group where the YP make a distinction between their voice work and the work EPs do:

YP3: because it's one thing like wi a job talking to kids and doing all other stuff, like all other important stuff you do

JK: Mm

YP3: but like doing the voice side of it it's a different thing altogether

JK: Yes okay

YP3: like you've got to advocate on both but it's like different forms

(FG3, LN703-708)

**I am interested in the focus on voice in these extracts and make links between the relationship as *unestablished* in these instances and a wider discourse of voice.**

Furthermore, there are times in the joint group discussion where the YP tell the EPs about their work in systems, or with other professionals, but neither group attempts to relate that back to the work of EPs, again suggesting a gap or distance between the groups.

**Reflective box**

During the young people’s descriptions of their work, I felt a tension in terms of my expectation of the EPs, and my own role. I wondered why the EPs were not mentioning the fact that there was crossover with their work, such as with Preparing for Adulthood, or the development of bullying policies. I couldn’t decide whether I should step in at this stage and say that this crosses over with the work of EPs. Slightly later in the conversation I begin trying to make links with the previous focus group conversations - I had a sense that I was like a link for the groups. Later again, I ask if the YP would like to hear from the EPs – I think I was conscious of the structure I had suggested (both groups telling a bit about themselves before moving into a more shared conversation). It is interesting that they all do follow my lead.

Equally, the EPs suggest a gap between their experiences and YPs’ by indicating that their work is difficult to explain to them:

JK: EPs as well about what you would you like to talk a little bit about what you do?

BT: Yeah gosh what do we do?” (FG3, LN198).

There are times when the EPs talk about their lack of relationship with CYP in parts of their systemic practice, or that they do not know how CYP are involved in established systems of decision-making. **At these times I locate the use of the *unestablished* construction within a wider discourse of inclusion.** I am interested in exploring the effect of these ways of talking about the relationship and have used the following extract as the basis for this:

**Reflective Box**

As I do the analysis, and write about it, I have moments where I wish I had asked more questions in the focus groups or been more probing. For instance, there are times where I wonder if I could have prompted participants to add more clarity about what they mean by something. I think this thought is a reflection of the fact that when I was facilitating the focus group, I was also in it as a participant to some extent, as any researcher is, but particularly because I was a TEP working with EPs. I was therefore making assumptions in terms of meaning, which I perhaps could have taken more time to explore.

I also wonder though, if my thoughts and feelings around this are a throwback to the emphasis on positivism in psychology. My feelings perhaps suggest an underlying assumption on my part that I should be uncovering something that the EPs are keeping hidden, rather than the more social constructionist perspective that the meaning is created through what they say, as well as my interpretation of it.

EP3: but in terms of how they’re commissioned or because often referrals to us are kind of made well they’re not really referrals but we meet with schools and we think about which young people might I sup it might be helpful for us to have involvement em and, yeah, I am aware even just saying that that doesn't really give much opportunity for young people to be to be

EP2: yeah

EP3: included in whether they want that involvement or to ask for it em, and I know young people can request our involvement but eh I've not actually had that in the entire time I've been practising

JK: [short out breath]

EP3: and maybe that is because they don't know about us they also may just not want us [laughing] which is fair

(FG3, LN636-646)

In this extract I note that the EP acknowledges the lack of relationship with CYP in this context and uses a particular interpretation of inclusion where YP are given opportunities to take part in already existing systems. To begin with I suggest that the YP are positioned in a more passive role and the EP in a more active role, yet I am interested that the EP then goes on to open up the possibility of YP critiquing what is on offer, perhaps opening the door to YP having a more active role in working with adults to design systems.

At other times, the EPs use the *unestablished* construction by talking about their relationship with CYP, explicitly in the context of systemic change, as being actively blocked. Applying further stages of the analysis to one extract in which the EPs use this particular version of the *unestablished* construction highlights how they position themselves as knowledgeable and open to collaboration but feeling like blocks, such as statutory aspects of their role, stop them from taking up those opportunities. **In the use of the *unestablished* construction in this way, I locate it in a wider legal discourse, where I understand a connection being made with the EP statutory role, as outlined in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015).**

In this extract, the EPs build a theoretical bridge to collaboration with YP, however, despite positioning themselves as open to this type of practice, they are explicit in feeling blocked from being able to engage with CYP in this way:

EP3: …I just got this sort of sinking feeling that this is a blind spot for us, we are so and I've, and I've known group work as an approach happen in various services, but it's very rarely it seems very rarely sort of an intervention that we get involved in. It's much more of a coaching model in terms of interventions or and that kind of direct work with young people, I'm not, I'm just I it just made me think about how well placed we are to do that work in terms of our understanding of change and our ability to facilitate and support and enable participation. Em, and I know why we don't do it. We don't do it because of service level agreements and a, and a focus on individual case work and, and statutory constraints

(FG1, LN300-308)

These blocks include the role expectations of others, statutory obligations, financial/bureaucratic arrangements with schools, as well as confidence. In terms of practice, EPs struggle to find a path through the barriers they face, and this can affect their capacity to show leadership in moving forward to bridge the gap to working with CYP, with them sometimes assigning responsibility to others:

EP2: … why haven't we been previously involved [laughing]? Obviously, it's great that, for your thesis to bring us together, but in my head, I'm like, woah I didn't know such groups

(FG1, LN646-648)

So, despite feeling enthusiastic, open, willing and curious about working in *partnership* with CYP to create systemic change, EPs feel in a “box” (FG1, LN347), restricted and weighed down by the barriers they face. This mix of feelings appears to lead them to feel passive, powerless to connect with CYP and at times embarrassed.

EPs also acknowledge, and express frustration, that the relationship with CYP in the context of systemic change, is not a stronger part of their professional practice. In these examples the relationship is talked about as being something they might observe and not take part in, or a missed opportunity.

Towards the end of the EP focus group the EPs also present themselves as having little knowledge of the group of YP they are due to meet and express curiosity about them, frustration that they do not know about the group already and lacking confidence in engaging with CYP in this way. The curiosity the EPs show in their group is also reflected in the joint group with the EPs and YP both asking questions and telling each other about themselves (which I acknowledge was in some ways encouraged by the structure I suggested for the discussion). They also suggest at times that the relationship is dependent on certain things, like seniority of position, or is intermittent.

In contrast to the frustration that EPs express in their focus group, in the YPs’ group, when the YP also express uncertainty about their knowledge of EPs and about the possibility of collaboration, this appears to provide a platform for them to try and learn more about the EPs and express an openness to working with them. In the following extract, by constructing the relationship as *unestablished*, it allows the YP to think about the steps they could take towards establishing that relationship, but in a way that is meaningful to the YP and allows them to have some equality in the relationship. The YP position themselves as separate from and unknowledgeable about EPs, which allows them to ask questions about them. I would speculate that the YP’s experience of the relationship through this construction is one where they feel they have rights and some pride in their knowledge of the processes, importance, and impact of YPs’ voice. In terms of practice, the YP use this construction of the relationship to open the possibility of working with EPs in ways which they feel are meaningful and can lead towards change:

YP1: I think another question we can ask these, I know these psychologists will be like for everyone but how does eh people shape their services? So does young people's views get into it? Does thing, or if I say people, then we can see if they're going to touch on young people and see if that's going to be touched on or if they're just going to say, “Well, we've spoken to adults we've spoken to our senior members and NHS”

JK: Okay, so how do people shape their services,

YP1: Yeah

JK: so how do people shape educational psychologists’ services?

YP1: Yeah and then if we don't hear youth and we can question them and say why is that not a thing?

YP2: Yeah

YP3: Because there’s a lot of parent, well, parent groups at the minute rather than young people’s groups and a lot of people don’t listen to the younger end as much because it's we're not it’s like we’re not seen as, although you've got the actual experience

(FG2, LN890-903)

I am interested that this use of the *unestablished* construction extends into the joint group, with both EPs and YP using it in this way. The YP appear to grow in confidence in their exploration of the EP role:

JK: Any questions or thoughts about what we’re speaking about, em even even if it's like, oh not quite sure what you mean by that, or I didn't know you did that, or I wonder if you do this, or, from both sides actually

YP3: I mean I didn’t know services went up to 25. That's when I had educational psychologist it finished at 18

EP2: Okay, yeah

YP3: then they had to put you to adult services, but my mum told them not to she just didn’t think I’d do owt after school so

JK: Mmm

EP2: Yeah it’s if they have em, yeah, if they've got an Education Health and Care Plan up until the age of 25 or if they’re in further education I think I believe

JK: Yeah yeah

YP2: Yeah

EP3: Yeah

EP2: I think the changes came, I think, through the code of practice.

(FG3, LN244-258)

Considering the impact of the use of this construction on the possibility for collaboration between the groups, I interpret it as having the function of allowing the groups to understand more about each other. The subject positions allowed for are ones where participants can show curiosity towards each other. In terms of subjectivity, as the focus group proceeds, the YP appear to grow in confidence in asking questions of the EPs and do this in ways which actually link to practice, so beginning to really drill down into EPs’ work with respect to issues that the YP identify as being important to them, as in the extract below:

YP4: So would you be able to like, I know you won't be able to step in, but would you be able to like I don't know how to word it? Do you know like with the waiting lists like it could be ages. Could you, like, figure out if there’s like anything what could be in place while they wait?

EP2: I guess we could we could try and work with the situation and the adults and the young person involved in order to try and support the young person whilst they’re on the waiting list possibly

YP4: Because depending on what age CAMHS like close CAMHS only go up to 18 don’t they. So then they will have to go into a different meeting list.

(FG3, LN945-952)

## 5.3 Relationship as a *Service*

I consider the relationship to be constructed as a *service* in all three focus groups, with the EPs emphasising what they provide for YP and the YP discussing what they receive through the relationship. I also connect the *service* construction to times when I consider the language used by EPs as containing professional jargon, such as with the use of words like “transition” (FG3, LN415). Furthermore, I understood the *service* construction as connecting to times when the relationship was constructed as being a part of, and influenced by, wider professional systems, such as education, or the EHCP process, or even the systems surrounding COVID-19. Finally, I note that the relationship is constructed at times as relating to one-off meetings, which I associate with how people relate through the delivery of a *service*. This contrasts with the *partnership* construction where it is considered an ongoing relationship.

Through further analysis of the use of the *service* construction I have noted that both EPs and YP use it as a means of attempting to connect to the other group in the context of shared systems. While the YPs’ use of the construction is more effective in opening the possibility of collaboration in those systems, when the EPs and YP come together into dialogue, the *service* construction stops functioning as a way for the two groups to build a working relationship of equals. I unpack this in more detail below.

I made connections between the times when the EPs made explicit reference to doing something on behalf of CYP, “we are trained to…support and advocate on the behalf of children and young people” (FG1, LN370-372), as well as times when this is more implicit, such as working in a child-centred way, when representing CYPs’ voices, being protective of CYP, or being concerned with their rights. **Considering this focus on child-centred practice I therefore locate the EPs’ use of the *service* construction in a humanist discourse**.

The following extract provides an example of the EPs’ use of the *service* construction with a focus on child-centred practice, which I use as the basis of the next stages of analysis:

EP1: … so the [*LA group name*] kind of formulated a new system there, and they rolled ahead with ideas and a new and a wave of change that we weren’t that we had to then, em, fight to kind of get back in on and then to shape in the way that and influence it in the way that we that put children and young people first and based on our principles and our values.

(FG1, LN 48-53)

The EPs in this extract were talking about their work with a LA system which is designed to provide a multi-agency response when there are difficulties with an individual child’s current educational placement. I am interested that the use of this discourse allows the EPs to connect their systemic practice with CYP. The CYP are not, however, directly involved in this systemic work, but the EPs, whilst attempting to keep them central to the process, are working on their behalf.

Whilst this positioning might offer a connection between EPs’ work with systems, and their work with CYP, it is oriented in a way which means the child is a passive participant in processes of change.

In terms of subjectivity, I would speculate that taking the position of working on behalf of children allows EPs to feel a sense of moral purpose. In the above example their position is explicitly tied to their “principles and values” (FG1,LN53), that gives them courage to act in a leadership role for others in the system, in order to ensure the system meets the child’s needs.

I note the YP talking about needing to be supported, receiving support, or not receiving support, often in the context of diagnosis:

YP1: For me I could be completely wrong but it's like they help you with your diagnosis and stuff like that and they’re sometimes they can be, for example, the main like SENCOs and stuff like that, but more detailed in their in what they do and stuff like that

(FG2, LN615-617)

**With this emphasis on diagnosis I consider the YPs’ use of the *service* construction to be drawing on a medical discourse**. The medical discourse is further emphasised by times when the YP use terms such as ‘psychiatrist’ or refer to EPs prescribing medication. As standalone terms and references, these perhaps suggest that the YP are describing their interactions with professionals other than EPs, however, from the context, I have understood them as being linked to their construction of the EP role contributing to the medical discourse.

The extract below is an example of the YPs’ use of the *service* construction, through their reference to diagnosis, and again provides an opportunity for further analysis:

YP1: For me I could be completely wrong but it's like they help you with your diagnosis and stuff like that and they’re sometimes they can be, for example, the main like SENCOs and stuff like that, but more detailed in their what they do and stuff like that

JK: Okay,

YP1: And I think a lot of people whose

(INTERRUPTION – a few seconds)

YP1: and basically like the for example, getting diagnoses and stuff like that I think that process is very complicated and very eh, very strange. So, for example, if, for example, you go for ADHD and you try and see if it's got that once they say “No, it's not that” it's not like you're going to get referred to another service to try and figure out what it could be.

[Break in extract]

JK: And do you feel that educational psychologists are quite part of that experience, of those processes?

YP2: Em, this is what I want to find out

JK: Okay

YP2: because I'm interested in to see why the waiting lists are so long

JK: Okay

YP2: And

YP3: Because there’s that many issues

YP2: Yeah,

JK: Okay

YP2: and the more admin side of things to do with like how come there's a backlog,

JK: Mmm

YP2: and how can that be resolved?

JK: Do you feel that something you'd like to ask of educational psychologists

YP2: Yep

YP1: Yes

(FG2, LN615-626, 641-653)

Considering the action orientation of the participants, I am interested in the statement, *“*For me I could be completely wrong but*”* (FG2,LN615)*.* The tentativeness of this suggests to me that the participant is not confident in their understanding of the EP role, and focusing on the diagnostic role helps them gain confidence in what they are saying. I am making this suggestion, considering the historical context of the EP role in relation to CYP, where the medical discourse has been prevalent.

**Reflective box**

I had a lot of strong feelings in this part of the focus group, which return to me as I read it back. I remember feeling confused about why the YP were talking about diagnosis, which led to me asking further questions to try and clarify if they were trying to say that the diagnostic process was linked to EPs. I thought this diagnostic construction was very narrow and I was quite surprised by it, which perhaps is another example of the gap between EPs and YP, in that, at one level, I inhabit the EP role and I struggled to understand the way they were constructing the role. I also felt the participant had questions loaded in what they were saying which led me to ask them if they wanted to ask it as a question to the EPs.

Reading further, I notice another participant beginning to critique the diagnostic system “getting diagnoses and stuff like that I think that process is very complicated and very eh, very strange” (FG2, LN621-622).Willig (2013) suggests that it is useful to consider the discursive construction in relation to other parts of the text. In other parts of the transcript, the YP similarly critique the systems that other professionals inhabit, in pieces of work in which they have been active partners in system change e.g. their work on a bullying questionnaire (FG2, LN510). I would argue that returning to the safe, familiar ground of the discourse of diagnosis allows them the platform by which they can critique the systems in which EPs work. Alternatively, returning to the analogy of the gap between YP and EPs, the medical discourse might have provided them with a bridge to EPs, to be able to open up the possibility of working with EPs on making changes to shared SEND systems.

Considering the way the YP are positioning themselves, in this instance they use the rather passive position of being recipients of a *service* as a stepping stone to the more familiar position of being effective, knowing, social actors, who are able to make change, and by finding a shared system, this allowed them a platform to critique it. Adopting this position therefore enabled the potential for agency for the YP.

Considering practice on the part of YP, I think the *service* discursive construction opens up an opportunity for the YP having a voice and agency in making changes to the services in which EPs are involved. With this sense of safety in their knowledge of the EP role the YPs’ subjective experience is perhaps a sense of confidence, legitimacy and equality with EPs.

I have noted that the EPs and YP attempt to use the *service* construction in the same ways in the joint focus group, but not to the same effect. The extract below is an example from the joint group where the EPs talk about working on YPs behalf through advocacy:

EP3: I think some of it's about advocating for that young person because although we’re kind of employed by the local authority our role is always to think about that young person, not necessarily, obviously we do think about the other people that are working with them, but they’re I suppose our priority in terms of the views that people have got. Em

(FG3, LN215-218)

It is notable that in these portions of the transcript the YP do not respond, which I interpret as the construction closing the possibility of collaboration between the two groups. Likewise, when the YP use the *service* construction in the same way they did in their separate group (as recipients of a service), the EPs do respond, but not in a way which opens the possibility of collaboration:

YP3: I think is it from you that we've got to be referred to that [?] psychologists?

EP2: Em, yy in terms of accessing our support

YP3: like the targeted youth support and stuff I think

YP4: [?]

YP3: for like [*group name*] thing on a Monday and Thursday you’ve got to have a referral now to go to it

YP4: Yeah but I don't think it's from like psychologists I think it’s

YP2: Mm

EP2: Yeah I don’t

JK: Yeah, I know yeah sorry

EP2: No I I I don't think that's I’ve never referred anyone to sort of those sorts of things.

(FG3, LN296-306)

In another extract from the joint focus group, I note the EPs appear to lose agency with respect to working collaboratively with YP, when both groups are constructing the relationship as a *service* that can be given or received within the context of wider systems. In the context of talking about an issue the YP have raised about difficulties they perceive in the transition between school or college and university, I notice that whilst there are attempts on both sides to make a connection through this construction, it does not seem to lead to the possibility of collaboration. The EPs position themselves as being the givers of a *service* through phrases such as “supporting that transition” (FG3, LN415) and the YP place themselves in the receiver position “it’s not like they can’t just transfer that information across” (FG3, LN426-427). Thus, both groups appear to be using the *service* construction to attempt to make a connection. However, in terms of practice, the construction closes the possibility of collaboration, in the way that EPs appear to suggest that wider systems issues, which they do not have power to control, actually hold them back. This indicates that the EPs lose agency in this systemic context “their school kind of take that over and do the yearly reviews with them, and they might not involve me in that again” (FG3, LN436-437). In terms of subjectivity both groups seem disappointed, with EPs talking about feeling “a bit sad” (FG3, LN434) and YP talking about thinking “It's a very disjunctive approach I think” (FG3, LN438).

I also note that in this extract, following an unsuccessful experience of making a connection, the YP start drawing upon their personal experiences to make a connection.

## 5.4 Relationship as a *Partnership*

The relationship is explicitly constructed at times as EPs and YP working together in *partnership.* I am interested in how the function of this construction contrasts with previous constructions, such as the relationship as a *service,* which might also locate the relationship within a shared system but does so in a way which closes the possibility of genuine equal collaboration between the groups. In comparison, as I explore below, there are times in the transcripts when there is more explicit, and effective construction of the relationship as one where YP and EPs are working togetherin *partnership.* Although the *partnership* construction is used in all three groups, it has relatively minor use in the EPs’ and YPs’ separate groups and becomes much more prominent in the joint focus group. In both the YPs’ and EPs group the times when they construct the relationship as working together in *partnership*, is often future oriented, or an imagined possibility. The YP also talk about influencing EP services, and in doing so sometimes draw upon their experiences of other constructions of their relationship with EPs (such as being recipients of a diagnostic service). I have explored below in more depth how it is used in each of the focus groups.

**The ways in which the *partnership* construction utilises personal experience, both in the types of knowledge drawn on as well as the ways in which the groups interact with each other, has prompted me to locate this within a wider relational discourse**.

In the EP focus group, the *partnership* construction shows how, even before meeting the YP, the EPs can construct the relationship in a way which opens the possibility of practice that allows partnership working with CYP. I think it is interesting that in this group, the use of the *partnership* construction becomes most optimistic in terms of the possibility of collaborating with YP when it is placed in the future as an imagined possibility, as in the following extract:

EP3: Just going off what we were saying about fair access, I I imagine if kids were more involved in and we were working that way and children and young people were more involved then the language that we would hear around children would be very different. I think it would sound, more positive I hope that they would be considered, more as a it's going to sound awful just as a person as a human being

EP1: As an individual.

EP3: Yeah, I think that would be a huge shift because they would be our partners rather than em

(FG1, LN441-447)

In this extract I note that in constructing the relationship as being in a *partnership* with CYP it functions to allow the relationship to have an effect beyond the relationship itself, impacting on, “the language that we would hear around children” (FG1, LN443). In terms of positioning, I propose that the self-correction in language from “kids” to “children and young people” (FG1, LN441-442) suggests the speaker is deliberately moving themselves from a position where they are infantilising the CYP to treating them with more equality. The EPs build on this by suggesting that the act of not treating them, “like a human being” (FG1, LN445) is something that happens beyond the EP/CYP relationship, suggesting that this is not a feature of this relationship. Considering subjectivity, I have interpreted this construction as allowing the EPs to think and feel like they are a force for good in the CYPs’ lives. This is strengthened with the explicit mention of “positive” and “hope” (FG1, LN444).

The use of the *partnership* construction in the YPs’ group also opens the possibility of collaboration between the groups. Mirroring the EP focus group, this is a relatively less used construction and is prompted by my future-oriented question about imagining working with EPs. I am interested in the ways in which this construction, which I locate within a relational discourse, crosses over and intertwines with a medical discourse. I note that as the discussion moves between these discourses, different forms of knowledge are talked about and used to mediate the relationship between YP and EPs:

YP4: I’d really like to help them understand their awareness of SEND and like mental health

JK: Okay

YP4: because its easy for them to like, say, “oh there's like all these” and that but if they don't really understand what we're going through

JK: Mmm

YP4: then it they could, like, say, “Oh, yeah, this will do this will help and that” but if our heads aren’t working like how they think they are

JK: Okay

YP4: Then it's not going to like give us that help

JK: Okay

YP4: So it would be, even though we're trying to like, psychiatrist might think, oh they’re going like steps forward and might be going step backwards instead,

JK: Yeah okay

YP2: and I do think it's being about transparency

JK: {okay

YP2: to do with, em, specific, em, like details, of the diagnosis.

JK: Okay

YP2: So em because, like just like what the person said before me is that it's good to put into from theory from psy psychology

JK: Mmm

YP2: to try and figure out what what is the appropriate diagnosis for the individual, em, but sometimes even from that diagnosis, it can deviate a little

JK: okay

YP2: and it's being able to understand that it's from an individual basis

JK: Right okay

YP2: rather than a group

(FG2, LN684-709)

In this extract the discussion really opens the possibility of YP and EPs working together in *partnership*, but by using a construction that suggests the value of YPs’ experiential knowledge, resonant with narrative perspectives (White, 1990). The participants emphasise how YPs’ experiential knowledge is useful to EPs, so potentially impacting on EP practice, but also affecting the positioning of the YP to the EPs, where the YP is a knowing actor who has a valid perspective on systems issues, thus bringing more equality into the relationship. In terms of practice, as Willig (2013) describes, “what can be said and done” (p. 136), the use of the *partnership* construction clearly opens the possibility for YP acting with EPs, in itself a form of practice, but then also impacting on how EPs practice and so then impacting other YPs’ experiences. I take from this extract that the YP have a sense of hope that working with EPs could be a partnership that could create meaningful change in SEND systems. They appear to grow in confidence through this extract, in terms of the value of their contribution to the potential partnership.

The examples I have considered from the joint group as connected by this discursive construction include times when the talk explicitly draws upon the possibility of working together in *partnership*, as well as exchanges which include the idea of EPs reaching out or offering something to YP, or YP doing the same for EPs. There are also times when the talk considers the relationship as something that might offer the possibility of a shared experience:

EP2: Yeah, I think I'm finding that tricky as well because I'm new to [*town name*] there's an awful lot of systems for for me to get my head around and what's actually out there, you know, I think and and I think that's yeah, it's tricky, I guess when you're seeking support to know what's available, I think perhaps as well,

(FG3, LN310-313)

The relationship is constructed as being potentially ongoing, which I associate with the idea of a more collaborative working relationship than the type of interaction people might have in one-off or short-lived relationships.

I have understood the YP and EPs using personal experiences as a bridge between the *unestablished* construction to the more connected *partnership* construction. The YP often do this by drawing on their experiential knowledge, but in addition there are times when the personal characteristics of EPs or YP are deemed important, or when YP seek personal information about the EPs. The EPs empathise with YP and express feelings about their relationship with YP, and at one point a YP highlights the importance of EPs empathising, “if you've gone to like work with children and young people with special educational needs like if you're going to talk to em know what it’s like” (FG3, LN876-877).

To explore in more depth how the EPs and YP use the *partnership* construction in dialogue with one another in the joint focus group, I have used two extracts from that group. In the first (Extract 1) a youth participant uses the construction, and then in the second (Extract 2), two EPs use the construction. The EP extract does not immediately follow the YPs’ extract, but they are connected in that they are discussing the same content – ways in which they could work together.

**Extract 1**

YP1: And I think what we we need to do as young people and then as services is to start reaching out to these services to start having this conversation because I think at the moment we tend to do stuff but it tends to be the other way round where services comes to us and maybe the approach needs to be we start need to asking services ‘have you thought about this? Have you thought about that?’ Because sometimes the services might be over stretched and probably won’t ever think about it but once you ask them, they might be saying ‘oh we've been wanting to do this we need we need to do this’ because this is been in the government plan or the green plan or whatever’s come out recently and maybe something we need to start questioning us ourselves to ask staff members to start asking what has been going on could we get involved? And then it's about also trying to join up back. So like for example, every year there's something called [*event name*] which you might know of

(FG3, LN731-746)

**Extract 2**

EP3: … but, uh, when I'm kind of working my role, I'd like to be able to support what young people want to see in our service

JK: Mm

EP3: and I kind of need to know what that is to be able to push for it on other people's behalfs but yeah

EP2: yeah,

EP3: and for us to be reaching out I think it’s em it’s a two way thing isn’t it

JK: Okay

YP2: Yeah

EP2: Yeah. Yeah, I think for me as well it was how you want that on like involvement to be ongoing, like over a long, long period of time is so important rather than it being a tick box

EP3: Yeah

JK: Yeah

YP2: Yeah

YP1: Yeah

EP2: em you know, and like you were saying about sort of em new barriers are coming up all the time and so we need to constantly be checking in with our service users and the young people themselves to say ‘Well, how are you finding this?’ It needs to be that more ongoing involvement, I think, um, yeah, but definitely, like, [*EP name*] sort of the two way em relationship needs bringing more to the forefront I guess

(FG3, LN831-851)

I am interested to note the way in which, in Extract 2, the EPs, as well as responding to the opportunity for collaboration the YP creates in Extract 1, also appear to build on what each other is saying. In terms of action orientation, this construction of the relationship as being a *partnership* functions to open the possibility of an ongoing conversation between the groups about how shared systems work and how EPs operate within them in ways which impact on YP. The first EP considers the idea of utilising the system to support the possibility of a collaborative relationship through the use of phrases such as “two way” (FG3, LN838). However, she does this by also drawing on the *service* construction (suggesting that they could do things on YPs’ behalf), so simultaneously closing the possibility down. The other EP appears to build on this by introducing the idea of the relationship being “ongoing” (FG3, LN849) and in contrast to a “tick box” (FG3, LN842) so suggesting that the relationship has depth and meaning.

In terms of positionality, I note that in the extracts the YP and EPs position themselves as being able to proactively connect with the other, with both using the phrase “reaching out” (FG3, LN732 and FG3, LN837). This suggests to me that the groups are reaching for equality in the positions they take in the relationship.

I think it is interesting as well that the EPs talk explicitly about the idea of using the relationship as a way of overcoming “barriers” (FG3, LN847) for YPs’ involvement, which I have interpreted as practice. This is reminiscent of the *unestablished* construction used in the EP focus group where the EPs took on a much more powerless position in relation to the barriers they faced in engaging in a collaborative relationship with YP. It appears that the possibility of a relationship itself builds a sense of agency on the part of the EPs in terms of being able to work in ways which include YP in shared conversations about shared systems.

With reference to subjectivity, I note a confidence in the way the YP approaches the idea of being proactive in approaching EPs. In contrast, in parts of the transcript between these two extracts there are places where an EP talks explicitly about her uncomfortable feelings, such as feeling “guilty” (FG3, LN823) with reference to these proactive moves from the YP to engage with EPs. I note though that in Extract 2 the EPs appear to move on from those difficult feelings and instead seem to be cautiously optimistic about the prospect of an ongoing working relationship, “the two way em relationship needs bringing more to the forefront I guess” (FG3, LN851).

## 5.5 Summary of Analysis

In summary, my analysis considers the relationship between EPs and YP to be constructed in three ways: the relationship as *unestablished*, the relationship as a *service* and the relationship as a *partnership*. I have noted the use of three discourses in the use of the *unestablished* construction: legal, inclusion and voice. I have made links between the *service* construction and wider humanist and medical discourses. I consider that the *partnership* construction, which is used in all three texts, draws upon a relational discourse.

All three constructions function as attempts by both EPs and YP to make a connection to the other group, albeit with different effects in terms of subject positions and implications for practice. For instance, the *service* construction is used in contrasting ways by the EPs and YP to connect to the other group as either the providers or receivers of a service within shared SEND systems. The YPs’ use of this is more effective in terms of creating more equality in subject positions and so the possibility of shared action. However, I note that when they come together in the joint focus group, the *partnership* construction becomes an effective means of renegotiating both the lack of response from both groups of the other’s use of the *service* construction, as well as allowing the curiousness embedded in the *unestablished* construction to take shape in the form of a dialogue. Furthermore, it appears to allow the EPs to gain a sense of agency in overcoming the barriers they experience to establishing collaborative relationships with CYP in the context of systemic change. The analysis has highlighted the importance of CYPs’ personal experiences and the way in which the YP used the knowledge gained from these to connect to EPs in a position of equality.

Yet even in parts of the transcript where the dialogue is more effective in opening the possibility of collaboration between the groups, other discourses are also apparent, which have the effect of simultaneously closing that same possibility. They operate alongside each other and this is a reminder that future interactions and relationships between EPs and YP in the context of systemic change are going to continue to be impacted by a variety of discourses, even in the spaces where we might find opportunities for a collaborative relationship.

I have touched only lightly on the wider discourses in which I understand the constructions to be connected and will explore my interpretation of the meaning we can take from these connections in the following chapter.

# Chapter 6: Further Interpretation and Discussion

Whilst there has been a level of interpretation in the above analysis, as I have made sense of the ways in which the constructions have been used to different effects, I would like to further that interpretation. As I carried out the analysis, I made links between different ideas and considered some underlying themes, which I present here. As outlined in the Research Design, I also extend the interpretation by considering some of the questions and prompts suggested by Parker (1992). I have explored my interpretation of the use of the discourses in more depth but have also taken the opportunity to highlight particularly pertinent issues which run through the analysis.

## 6.1 Inclusion

I am interested that there are times when the EPs, when considering the *unestablished* nature of the relationship with CYP, use language which can be located within a wider discourse of inclusion. For example, when talking about EPs’ discussions with school staff where their work in the school is being prioritised, they talk about CYP not being included. Although I note much less use of this discourse than others, I think it is worth briefly exploring. As Todd (2007) argues, writing from the perspective of education as well as with a specific view from educational psychology, we need to ensure we use critical perspectives on inclusion to ensure that it has the effects we intend it to in our practice.

The concept of inclusion is used multifariously in literature, policy and practice (see Todd, 2007; Lister, 1998; Levitas, 1996). In educational psychology the idea of inclusion is used most often with respect to the placement of CYP in mainstream schools or special educational settings, for example the emphasis on the inclusion of CYP with SEND in mainstream education in the Warnock Report (1978). However, as Todd (2007) highlights, the policy agenda in the UK has also influenced our understanding of inclusion, for example Children Act 2004 and the Every Child Matters policy (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2003) which Todd (2007) notes “embody a focus on social inclusion” (p. 11).

In this research, the discourse of inclusion is used in two ways, both as a method of integration into already existing systems, as well as a process where CYP may have a role in critiquing those systems. I would argue that these are two quite distinct ways of understanding the idea of inclusion. Although in both examples EPs and school staff show a commitment to the inclusion of CYP, this is not always applied in a way in which CYP have an equal position to adults in the design of systems in use. I am interested in the view of Levitas (1996) who suggests that in the social policy context in which she is writing, the language of social inclusion when underpinned by an idea of integration, replaces that of equality, and so emphasises responsibilities and social obligations over rights. If we are working in a way which integrates CYP into existing systems, then I think we need to ask ourselves questions about the purpose and impact of that, in the same way that Levitas demonstrates with wider social policy. More widely, when considering inclusion as an aspect of our collaborative work with CYP, we need to consider how we operationalise it in a way where YP and EPs have equal positions in defining and creating services which are meaningful to YP.

## 6.2 Voice

I am also interested in the way in which the YP introduce the discourse of voice in their use of the *unestablished* construction, and the effect this has of simultaneously drawing a distinction between the experiences of YP and EPs whilst bolstering the position of YP. I note this provides them with a means of creating a relationship with EPs which could create meaningful change for YP.

As noted in my Literature Review, I am struck by the emphasis in educational psychology literature on voice work in relation to individual young people’s educational journeys. I think the discourse of voice being used by the YP in this text is quite deliberately drawing on an alternative interpretation, which is determined by young people’s collective experiences. As this research has a heavy focus on EP practice, I have mostly considered the discourses made available by the policy and professional context in which EPs work, however I think it is interesting to note that in this instance, an alternative discourse is drawn on, which perhaps has stronger connections to grassroots youth action. I am also interested that there is one occasion in the joint group where an EP also appears to use this alternative voice discourse:

EP2: I guess that there have been quite recent significant changes in our service in terms of sort of this academic year em, and I'm wondering if young person voice was included in that? I wasn't yeah but there was quite some significant changes and I know it's sort of em in discussions with lots of people in [*town name*] in the local authority and high up in sort of children's services but yeah, it would be interesting to know if if young person’s voices were captured within those sort of big decisions em in terms of how we operate

(FG3, LN618-623)

A review of policy and practice documents from the youth work sector in which the SEND youth group is located indicates that this version of a voice discourse is commonplace. The National Youth Work Curriculum (National Youth Agency, 2020), for example, uses the language of voice to refer to young people having a say around politics, influencing change through youth councils, or being involved in discussions about the projects in which they are involved. The British Youth Council runs the Youth Voice Programme through a contract with the Cabinet Office of the UK government and refers to the initiative in the following way:

The programme provides opportunities for young people to influence public decision-making at a national and local level, supporting a range of democratic representation structures and enabling young people to scrutinise some of the biggest issues they face.

(British Youth Council, 2022)

Ingram (2013) provides an insight into the way in which CYPs’ voice can be understood specifically in the educational psychology context. She contrasts two approaches to gathering and representing children’s views, which she associates with the idea of children’s voice. The first, which she identifies with the more widely held perspectives derived from the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989), she aligns with “the empowerment of children and young people, and the insight they bring to problem-solving” (p. 335). Ingram acknowledges that educational psychology has a stake in this approach, but she goes on to suggest another prevalent interpretation which is more concerned with considering children’s views as one variable of a problem situation. Although she does not highlight this, I understand her to be referring to problem situations relating to individual CYP. I am interested in this distinction in the context of the way the YP highlight what they see as a fundamental difference between the approaches of their youth action work and the way EPs approach their work with CYP. I have highlighted above one example in the joint focus group where EPs use this alternative voice discourse and in the context of this research, considering opportunities for EPs to work collaboratively with YP, I suggest that we perhaps need to start engaging with communities of YP to stretch our use of the voice discourse from individual to collective voice. Moreover, in doing this, we need to consider the positions we take in our work with YP, where they have agency in the ways in which their voices are used.

## 6.3 Statutory Work

The EP focus group highlights the role of statutory work in educational psychology practice and the barrier it places in EPs developing collaborative working relationships with CYP. I interpret this as linking to a legal discourse and note that this is primarily drawn upon in the EP focus group and is not apparent in the YPs’ focus group or the joint focus group.

Considering the policy context in which EPs work in England, I note that the legal discourse surrounding our work remains prominent. The statutory role expectations of the EP in England with reference to carrying out assessments as part of the EHCP process are outlined in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015). Buck (2015) argues this statutory role is one of the main reasons for our continued employment by LAs.

Considering historical perspectives, Martin (2017) notes, in her discussion of the history of British educational psychology in the period 1944-1978, “how strong the influences of social and political attitudes, the legal framework and the institutions within which people work can be on the development of a profession.” (p. 79). In this period, “Educational psychologists are still seen by many as assessors and their primary task as that of assessment” (Martin, 2017, p. 79).

Buck (2015) suggests that there has been a gap between the systems approaches of EPs and the statutory role of the EP. Writing at the time of the publication of the Children and Family Act (2014) and the associated SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), Buck was hopeful that it offered the opportunity for an aligning of these two traditions. I acknowledge that the Children’s Act (2014) and the 2015 CoP do reflect a shift in emphasis towards involving CYP in decision-making however my analysis suggests that in the context of this research, Buck’s hopes have not been realised. It appears that EPs experience the discourse around the statutory function as working in opposition to their ambitions to work collaboratively with groups of CYP, negatively impacting on their agency to create time and space for that work. I am also interested to consider the effect of the legal discourse in the EP group alongside the way the *unestablished* construction operated in the YPs’ and the joint focus group. In these focus groups, both the EPs and the YP show curiosity and interest in the other group as a means of overcoming the unestablished nature of the relationship. In doing so, both groups show that by being open about what we do not know about each other, listening and showing curiosity, we open the possibility of being able to work together. A recently published DfE commissioned research report into workforce issues relating to EPs in England (Atfield et al., 2023) suggests that statutory work continues to be a key aspect of the EP role, impacting our capacity to engage in a wider range of work. In terms of the implications of the finding from this research for EPs’ future practice, I suggest that we need to find spaces to open these conversations with CYP beyond the confines of our statutory work, in order to begin opening the possibility of future collaboration.

## 6.4 Diagnosis

There was such a strong emphasis on diagnosis by the YP in the focus groups that I feel it is important to reflect upon it in more depth. In the first instance, I was conscious of my own response to the YPs’ interest in diagnosis, and how distanced I felt from this interpretation of the EP role. As explored in my Introduction, these within child medical models have traditionally been a part of educational psychology practice, in contrast to the more systemic models discussed in more depth in this research. It seems, despite alternative perspectives and practice, a medical discourse appears to persist in educational psychology.

Farrell et al. (2006) provide an overview of the role of the EP, identifying key functions as “individual assessment, consultancy, intervention and training” (p. 8). More recently, a report by the DfE (Lyonette et al., 2019) addressing issues relating to the EP workforce in England identifies key aspects of the role as the identification of SEND, supporting the skill development of staff working in education, and supporting children, families’ and staff wellbeing. Reports such as these indicate that there is a wider range of aspects to the EP role than that identified by the YP in this research. It is interesting to note however, that both Farrell et al. (2006) and Lyonette et al. (2019) in reports over 10 years apart note the enduring domination of the assessment role of the EP.

It appears then, that while the EP role is varied, there is to some degree an ongoing emphasis on the assessment function in terms of discourses available to YP, reminiscent of the way the EPs emphasised the statutory role. The medical discourse the YP use in their construction of the relationship with EPs perhaps reflects this. The joint focus group indicated that while this discourse was one available to YP when they attempted to construct a relationship with EPs, it was not effective in opening the possibility of collaboration.

I am curious about the possibility that formal educational systems have become sites for the application of psychological ideas, which then return to impact the discourses available for current understandings of what it means to be a psychologist in education, or what it means for how EPs and CYP can relate to one another in the context of education. With respect to the use of medical discourses, Barker and Mills’ (2018) study explores the ways in which previous models of psychology have created a context in education in which the “psychiatrisation, medicalisation and psychologisation of children and childhood” (p. 638) continues. I would suggest that this in turn has impacted on the discourses available to CYP with regard to how they construct their relationship with EPs.

**6.5 Child-centred Perspectives**

I am also interested in reflecting further on the EPs’ use of a humanist discourse in their focus on child-centred practice. As with my above discussion of the use of a medical discourse, I have considered earlier discourse analytic work on the effect of psychological perspectives on educational practice and discourses. Walkerdine (1998) explores the impact of the application of Piaget’s theories regarding child development in education, through which British primary schools have come to operate a child-centred pedagogy. She argues that Piaget’s work, and wider aligned movements of thought regarding children’s development, was intended to have a liberatory effect from earlier ideas relating to inherited, predetermined intelligence. Instead, she argues, the focus on the individual child and the measurement of their progress through the notion of empirical categories of development, ensures that, “the child is produced as an object of the scientific and pedagogical gaze by means of the very mechanisms which were intended to produce its liberation.” (Walkerdine, 1998, p.190). Walkerdine argues that this is the discourse which frames our understanding of child development and has become integrated into the practices of teaching. As with the medical discourse, I am interested in the possibility that the previous application of psychological ideas in education has influenced the discourses then available for our continuing practice as EPs. In this example this relates to the use of a child-centred practice located in a humanist discourse.

Considering Walkerdine’s (1998) work, I suggest that when EPs are considering what can be changed in the system around individual children to improve the conditions of their learning, they are drawing on this child-centred perspective. In doing so they are inadvertently refocusing the regulatory gaze back on the individual child, even if working at the level of the system, on CYPs’ behalf. Whilst CYPs’ views and voices might be represented in EPs’ work at a systems level, it can be argued that they are included as passive partners. The joint focus group shows that when we bring YP and EPs together into dialogue, YP do not respond well to this way of relating. What this research perhaps helps highlight is the potentially stultifying effect of child-centred perspectives on CYPs’ capacity to take an active role, or to work collaboratively with EPs, in making changes to systems.

I think the power of a dominant discourse (Foucault, 1981; Hall, 2010) is that it becomes common sense and hard to see past. But by returning to the idea of Foucault’s (1977) “gaze” (p. 210), be it in the panopticon prison where all prisoners can be watched by a guard at any one time (Foucault, 1977), or in the context of education where the “monitorial school” (Walkerdine, 1998, p. 166) allowed constant surveillance of individual pupils, then we can be prompted to reconsider the focus of EPs’ work beyond the individual child. This analysis suggests that for EPs’ systemic work to open up the possibility of collaboration with CYP, where YP are active partners in impacting change at the level of the system, we need to shift the focus of our systemic work from individual CYPs’ needs to development and change for communities of CYP, in which they have an active role in determining and monitoring progress measures.

## 6.6 Professionalisation

I am also interested in the connection between the professionalisation of the relationship to both humanist and medical discourses. I am drawn to the perspective of Henriques et al. (1998) who suggest that the professionalisation of psychology in Britain came as a response to economic conditions which meant that humanist ideas about liberation from earlier forms of psychology were difficult to achieve. Henriques et al. suggest that these conditions created more need for people to seek employment following their studies in psychology, thus generating a greater emphasis on professionalisation of psychology. This pressure on psychology departments to demonstrate the usefulness of students (their ability to provide a service), in turn further asserts “more traditional practices of psychology” (p. 6), which I interpret as a return to medical models of practice. I am interested that both humanist and medical discourses feature in my analysis of the relationship between YP and EPs.

## 6.7 Individual and Community

However, I am also struck by the finding that it is when the EPs are responsive to YP sharing their individual experiences, often on the topic of diagnosis, that the opportunities for collaboration opened. Given the discussion above about moving the EP perspective away from individual CYP, this appears to me almost a contradictory finding. However, I think the analysis shows that YP can very powerfully draw upon their individual experiences in order to reflect on and be agents in processes of change. This is not necessarily in change relating to their own journeys, but in the SEND systems of which they are a part.

I would like to explore further the positive effect of the YPs’ interest in their individual experiences, in terms of the possibilities for collaboration with EPs and how this connects to Foucault’s (1998) ideas of regulation and resistance. Burman (1996) suggests:

If, as in Foucauldian analyses, power produces resistance, then resistance functions in relation to operations of power and can therefore be complicit in maintaining them.

(p. 10)

My interpretation of the YPs’ focus on diagnosis and, as such, their use of the medical discourse is that it is the most available and dominant in their current understanding of the EP role. As the most available discourse, the YP were able to link this to their personal knowledge and experiences of EPs to give them confidence in reaching out to them. The YPs’ lack of resistance in the adoption of the diagnostic discourse circumvents its regulatory force and they can then use their experiential knowledge of the shared SEND system as a means to make a connection with the EPs as knowing actors in the relationship.

As Hall (1997) suggests, Foucault argues that what we know about a subject also sets limits on what we know about ourselves, and I suggest that the YP, in their deconstruction of the knowledge base of diagnosis, deconstruct the relationship with EPs, and so redefine their subjective experience in relation to EPs. The YP begin by using the realist medical discourse to construct the relationship as a *service*, and in doing so they position themselves as passive receivers of a *service* from knowledgeable EPs. They go on, however, to construct the relationship as a *partnership*, whilst continuing to use the vehicle of their experiential knowledge of diagnosis, but in this context, as a means to create more equality of subject positions between EPs and YP. By deconstructing the legitimate knowledge relating to diagnosis, the YP deconstruct their relationship with EPs.

We perhaps need to understand this relationship between EPs and YP as an institutionalised object in the context of the systems we are talking about changing. I propose that given the history of the relationship and the powerful regulatory forces of the available discourses, the project of bringing EPs and YP together as equal partners in creating systemic change was perhaps rather radical! I wonder if some of the alternative forms of the relationship which we are utilising already, such as EPs drawing out the CYP’s voice and representing this whilst working on their behalf, is maintaining the regulatory effect because of the subject positions it produces? The YPs’ seeming lack of resistance in the adoption of the medical discourse is actually effective in not maintaining that regulation, by not creating resistance. In doing so they evade it, with the confidence that they know how to work collaboratively with professionals, and why should this relationship be any different?

When in dialogue with EPs, the effect of the YPs’ reference to their experience of diagnosis varies across the *service* and *partnership* constructions. When they try and use their experiential knowledge to position themselves as receivers of a *service* from EPs, this is not effective in opening up possibility of collaboration. Yet when they use the same knowledge to position themselves in a *partnership* with EPs it does have the effect of prompting the possibility of a working relationship. My interpretation of this is that the relationship, when formulated as a place where EPs and CYP are in equal positions, can shift our focus beyond the idea of there being a tension between individual and community interest.

In contrast then, to my starting position in the thesis, with an interest in moving away from a focus on the individual child, I am suggesting we return our attention to individual experience, but with different subject positions and purpose. We can begin to build alliances with CYP which address systems issues at the level of the group or organisation, and by engaging with CYPs’ stories and experiences we can work together to deconstruct the knowledge base of psychology and SEND systems, in order to create change.

**Reflective Box**

It feels important to reflect on my experience of this stage of the analysis, where I was drawn back to a focus on the experiences of individual YP. I was surprised and confused by the finding that it is perhaps through the vehicle of YPs’ individual experiences that EPs and YP can connect to make change at organisational levels. It felt as if this finding contradicted one of the underpinning ideas of the research, that a focus on CYPs’ community concerns, rather than individual interests provided opportunities for EPs to relate to CYP in new ways. I felt challenged to think differently by the connections I was making, and also experienced some delight that my expectations as an adult, and a TEP, were called into question by my work with CYP. Through the analysis I was finding ways to think differently about a subject which I had given so much considered thought to already.

## 6.8 Relational Thinking

As I have navigated through the analysis and the implications of the power of EPs engaging with CYPs’ individual experiences, I have been encouraged to expand my thinking about the value of thinking about individuals, communities, and relationships. Gergen (2009) suggests that we can move beyond ideas relating to self and community, with a focus on relationships as a primary concern. He argues that the relationship comes before the individual and that for the individual to exist the relationship needs to exist. He proposes that the idea of the “bounded” (Gergen, 2009, p. xv.) individual has become defined and normalised through enlightenment thinking and in an attempt to further challenge the “individualist tradition” (Gergen, 2009, p. xx.) he emphasises the idea of “relationally embodied action” (Gergen, 2009, p. xxi). Through this concept he suggests that the relationship creates the action, and I suggest this is an important idea to relate to my analysis and interpretation; the change we want to see in systems is developed through relationships. I argue that for this action, and change that comes from that action, to be meaningful for CYP it needs to come from relationships with them, based on dialogue, rather than a relationship based on giving/receiving a *service*, or keeping CYP in mind while working on their behalf.

I am interested in this idea of setting aside the idea of individual and community as being separate foci, instead reaching towards the relational in EP practice with respect to creating systemic change. Approaches which emphasise the value and impact of the relationship between adults and CYP have become more prominent in the work of EPs. Examples include support for the use of nurture groups (Sanders, 2007), or facilitating the development of attachment aware and trauma-informed schools (see for instance, Cherry & Froustis, 2022). National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines (NICE, 2015) also outline schools’ obligations with respect to training staff to meet the needs of CYP with attachment needs, a training role often given to EPs, as Tah et al. (2021) suggest. I propose, however, that these approaches are most often discussed with respect to how EPs support relational approaches in schools, and I do not believe there is strong evidence of the relational discourse in literature or policy documents relating directly to EPs’ relationships with CYP. As noted in my literature review, exceptions to this are found in narrative perspectives, or social constructionist perspectives more generally, which perhaps act as a route in, particularly with respect to the importance of CYPs’ experience. Moreover, Billington (2006) writes extensively on EP practice and invites us to ask ourselves the following key questions:

How do we speak of children?

How do we speak with children?

How do we write of children?

How do we listen to children?

And finally

How do we listen to ourselves (when working with children)?

(Billington, 2006, p.8)

I am interested in extending those relational perspectives on EP practice to our work at group and organisational levels, carried out in partnership with CYP.

**Reflective Box**

The relational perspective I considered through the work of Gergen (2009) prompted memories of my experiences working with young people in informal education. Whilst the focus of a lot of that work was on creating change in systems in partnership with and to the benefit of young people, the day-to-day work was built on the relationships we (youth workers) developed with young people. I wonder if, in the design of the research, I had lost sight of the centrality of those relationships in my preoccupation with other issues, such as theory which emphasises community over individual, or theory and practice which engages with organisational rather than individual change. As I reflect on those informal education experiences now, I remember how the opportunities to get to know one another and share experiences were driving forces for the changes we enacted together.

## 6.8 Power

As I noted in the Methodology, power is a key Foucauldian concept. By using FDA I have considered how power operates through the way that forms of knowledge are constructed in the use of different discourses. Whilst the focus on power has been implicit through the analysis, I would like to highlight my understanding of how power is operating in the constructions of the relationship between EPs and YP in the research.

It is the focus on subject positions which perhaps best highlights my understanding of the power operating between EPs and YP.

I have emphasised the way in which the EPs’ use of the humanist discourse operates to allow them to speak on behalf of the YP and in which the EPs take a more active role and the YP a more passive. In these examples I note that in the positioning of the EPs to the YP, the EPs are maintaining the power they have traditionally held in the relationship, even if the work described is ostensibly to represent CYPs’ views and be for their benefit.

However, as discussed, the YP navigate a route from being the passive receivers of a service delivered by EPs to a more active role as potential partners with EPs. The YP do this via a deconstruction of the knowledge base of diagnosis which they perceive to be one form of connection between EPs and CYP, moving instead to partnership, which opens the possibility for the groups to discuss and problem-solve shared understandings of SEND services. As noted, for Foucault, power, knowledge and discourse are interconnected, and in this research, I have understood the YP to have negotiated more power in their relationship with EPs through their lack of resistance to the discourse of diagnosis, which they describe in aspects of their experience. It is in finding a way of moving from the passive to the more active position that power seems to have shifted in the relationship.

Looking to the future, and the next steps for this research, I am interested in how to support CYP to develop that active role in their relationship with EPs into working in partnership to both discuss and make changes to SEND services. Considering the findings of this research, I would emphasise the importance of dialogue and relationship building between EPs and CYP as an important foundation to both groups feeling able to develop a partnership where both can have active roles.

## 6.9 Participant Feedback

I met with the participants to present the key points from the analysis and my reflections on them. I contacted all of the participants and only the EPs opted to meet. The meeting was an opportunity for the participants to reflect and feedback on the research results. I indicated that I could include their views about the results in the thesis. The following is a summary of that discussion.

**Reflective box**

While I was disappointed at the lack of opportunity to share and reflect on the analysis with the YP, I wonder if this reflects an important aspect of working in partnership with YP? Two of the four YP had left the group since we held the focus groups and time had passed between the focus groups and the feedback session. It is perhaps important to remember that YP are making transitions in their lives which impact on our partnerships with them. While we may develop ways of working that allow us to create ongoing collaborative relationships with YP, we need to recognise that these will have a temporality to them that is perhaps not reflected in professional partnerships.

With respect to the discussion around the *service* construction, one participant reflected on feeling that she may consider her relationship with CYP as a *service* before she has met them or got to know them. She noted feeling like she does not have the right to consider the relationship a *partnership* before that point. I found this a very grounding comment which served as an important reminder that the context in which we work is one where our relationships with CYP are often pre-determined by other people’s decisions, or pre-existing systems. For example, a lot of EPs’ work with CYP is negotiated through a planning system in schools of which CYP are not a part. Considering this idea from a discourse perspective, I wonder if it is a reminder that we need to be mindful of the range of discourses that impact our relationships with CYP, even when we seek to emphasise some over others. I am hopeful that this research will support that awareness of the range of ways we can relate to CYP and the impact of them.

The idea of there being a strong medical discourse resonated with the two EPs who had been in the joint focus group. Participants considered whether wider discourses about the psychologist do not make nuanced distinctions between different types of psychologists, so could be informed by representations of clinical psychologists, or forensic psychologists. Participants also raised the idea that CYPs’ perception of us can also be affected by the way other professionals, such as school staff, behave around EPs, before CYP have even met us. This discussion led us to reflect on the importance of finding opportunities to talk with others about the range of ways we work.

An interesting issue that sprang from the wider conversation was how each of us introduce ourselves to CYP in schools, with respect to names and titles. We talked about our general preference to use our first names (in contrast to school staff who tend to use titles and surnames) and participants suggested they felt we were potentially seeking to stand ourselves apart from the school system. I wonder if this relates to the relational theme from the analysis, and a sense that we wish to enhance the personal qualities of our relationships with CYP in the context of the systems in which we have a shared experience.

The analysis prompted discussion about developing relationships with CYP but a participant also highlighted the importance of ensuring that any work we do is sustainable. She noted that she feels cautious about being too open and curious in her conversations with CYP, raising expectations with CYP, or starting work that we cannot complete because of commitments that arise in other aspects of our roles. She raised the importance of being able to offer a commitment to CYP in order to build trust in the relationship. We considered how helpful it would be for EP services to offer structure and protection around this way of working to reduce the emphasis on relying purely on the creativity and commitment of individual EPs. The focus on these issues informed my thoughts on future developments.

# Chapter 7: Conclusions

## 7.1 Implications for Practice

### 7.1.1 Creating Space for Relationship Building

The research has highlighted that for us to enable EPs and CYP to work together as partners in creating systemic change at the level of the group and organisation, we need to create spaces for that relationship building. The language used to open the possibility of working together is found throughout the process of the EPs and YP coming together, indicating that there are discourses available to support that way of working. The use of these discourses run alongside others, such as a statutory discourse, and these alternatives can have the effect of closing the possibility of collaboration. Future developments need to protect the space for building relationships with CYP for them to flourish. It will be important also to include particular ways of relating to CYP. The research has shown the importance, value and impact of experiential knowledge when YP and EPs are creating partnerships, suggesting that we need to find ways to engage with YPs’ stories and experiences of services, not to hear and represent, but in an ongoing dialogue as active partners.

Furthermore, in that engagement with YPs’ stories we need to hold in mind the different ways in which the idea of YPs’ voice has been conceptualised by participants in this research and consider the positions we take in our work, where CYP have agency in the ways in which those voices and experiences are used. That positioning equally applies to the way we engage with ideas of inclusion, where I would suggest that if CYP were taking part as active partners in conversations about systems, we would have a better chance of defining and creating services which YP feel include them.

I am also interested in the way in which EPs appear to find agency to overcome barriers to systemic problems when drawing on a construction of the relationship as a *partnership*. Finding even small opportunities to engage with CYP in this way might have a cumulative effect in terms of helping overcome the barriers we face to work in this way. Equally, whilst I acknowledge that I introduced the idea of the two groups asking and telling things of each other, and so the content reflects that, I also noticed that the groups responded well to that approach. This suggests to me that the groups need structure and support to create these initial opportunities to build a relationship in the context of SEND systems.

I have lots of specific ideas about the practical applications of the findings of the research. I think these examples could stretch across a range of age ranges and contexts, but perhaps we could begin by focusing on the school context, where most EP practice happens. In the same way that we consider SENCOs our partners in schools, we could begin finding ways to work with CYP as partners, either through engaging with existing groups such as pupil councils, or through promoting and supporting the creation of SEND pupil action groups. Other examples might be to broaden our work using narrative, and solution focused methods, with an emphasis on collaboration with CYP to address organisational level systems issues. Or, to begin to find ways of using organisational level methods such as Appreciative Inquiry, in collaboration with CYP.

There would be barriers to simply beginning to include CYP in existing ways of working with school staff, such as confidentiality of discussing the needs of individual pupils in planning meetings in school. I am interested in the view of one of the youth participants:

YP1: …I think if we tell them that we want to work together, they can start seeing our side of the picture and start imagining ‘well this process what we've done for years and years and we’ve never wanted to change it. Oh we might have to change it now’ because it's moving on with the times…

(FG1, LN928-932)

The quote from the YP prompts us to think about being open to new ways of working which are generated through collaborations with CYP. The emphasis is perhaps less on finding ways to integrate CYP in our existing conversations, and more on creating opportunities for conversations which draw on CYPs’ experiences of those systems, to help us imagine new ways of working.

As the participants noted in the feedback session, it will be necessary to consider and address any practical issues that arise in developing collaborations with CYP, perhaps most importantly, to ensure that we create working relationships with CYP that are based on trust. In order to do that the undertaking of the work needs not to rely solely on the interest and motivation of individual EPs, considering the barriers they have identified in maintaining capacity for this way of working. It will require EP services to protect time for this work. In the first instance I would suggest that it could be effective to use existing research and development time if this is allocated by services.

Given the emphasis on relational work with CYP, I also think it is important that as EPs we begin integrating a conversation about our relationship with CYP into wider discussions about relational theory. For instance, looking at recent conference programmes from organisations such as the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) or the BPS, there are often talks and workshops addressing relational practice in schools but rarely a focus on the nature, quality, or impact of EP relationships with CYP.

### 7.1.2 Applying Psychology in Education

I understand our role as EPs to involve us applying psychology in education, but reflecting on my journey from informal education to psychology I am interested in where the line is between psychologist and educator. My interest in the topic of this research grew from my perception of the similar mix in foci of participation and systems work in informal education and educational psychology. Whilst I do not seek to recreate the informal education role in educational psychology, I do wonder about the possibility of conceiving the EP at least in part through the lens of educator. A key finding of the research has been the importance of drawing on CYPs’ experiential knowledge to construct a relationship in which EPs can be partners with CYP in creating systemic change, which reflects in some way the role of educator in informal education. I am interested in the possibility that EPs are offering a form of informal education, in which we are involved in a process of exploring with CYP their experiences as a means of developing our shared knowledge and understanding of the systems in which those experiences are located.

Returning to Freire’s theories about education, a further question I would like to raise is the importance of action in the learning process. Linking back to the issue of subject positions raised by the analysis, the active position taken by YP relates to the times when the possibility of collaboration with EPs opens. The implications of this for EPs is that we need to also take a position where we can relate to CYP as actors in the processes of system change, as opposed to people with views which we represent on their behalf. What I imagine this might look like in practice could include alliances which create tangible changes to systems, such as working together to develop school behaviour policies, developing and delivering training together, or planning and undertaking participatory research projects in schools. There is a debate in adult education about educators finding a space between agency and structure in which they can undertake the educational process with community members (Martin, 2000). In adult education that is a difficult place to find, given the restrictions imposed by funding or government agendas, but I would argue it is even more difficult to locate for educational psychologists. This research has highlighted the way in which the legal discourse can close the opportunities for partnership working with CYP in the context of systemic change. As we navigate our way to different ways of working with CYP, we need to remain conscious of our current and historical links to structures which do not serve to promote CYPs’ agency. These links can limit our capacity to support change designed and delivered with CYP and I would suggest that we need to seek and protect ways of working which draw on different discourses.

In considering the process of drawing on and building from informal knowledge, I am conscious of the juxtaposition with the formal education model in which we are embedded, and the potential for differing views of the purpose of education. I think as EPs we often take a reasonably neutral stance as to the purpose and function of education. I imagine, however, that if we begin to engage more purposefully with processes which support change in educational settings through engaging with CYPs’ experiential knowledge, we will start to experience conflicts between the aims and processes of formal education and the outcomes of our work. In preparation for that, I propose we will need peer supervision networks which support us to reflect on our experiences. More broadly, I think as a profession we need to connect with debates about the purpose of education and how that interacts with the purpose of our role. Considering this, I would like to see EPs engaging in more multi-professional partnership working at different levels of educational policy, practice and research.

### 7.1.3 Participation

I am interested in taking this argument a step further in a consideration of the implications of working with participatory processes in the context of formal education. I suggest that a discussion of EPs’ work in collaboration with CYP cannot be separated from a discussion about participation in schools more generally. EPs do not work with CYP in isolation from the school context, particularly in terms of systemic work. We therefore need to consider the culture of participation that exists in schools. As Jones (2017) argues, schools can take a paternalistic attitude towards participation, where they are very much in charge of the processes. If we want to work in ways which promote CYPs’ agency in this work, we need to consider the challenges we may face in doing so in systems which do not promote this approach. Rowe (2020), writing as an EP, offers alternative perspectives on building an approach to decision-making in schools which promotes collaboration with CYP. She utilises psychological concepts such as motivation and school belonging to make the case for promoting this way of working, and these arguments could be a useful avenue through which EPs can open conversations with schools that promote shared decision-making with CYP.

## 7.2 Strengths and Limitations

### 7.2.1 Covid-19

The project design and data collection for this study were carried out during some of the periods when Covid-19 was most prevalent in the UK, which influenced the design in terms of the use of some online methods. Working online had an impact in respect of recruitment, during which I found it more difficult to use relational skills to explain the project to potential participants. The delivery of the EP focus group through online methods had minimal impact, with only minor disruptions through participants being at home during the discussion. Reflecting on the findings in terms of the importance of the opportunity for EPs and CYP to meet and begin directly relating, I note that the opportunity to do that face-to-face was a strength of the project design, for which I have the youth participants to thank for suggesting that we alter the design to do that.

Covid-19 also impacted the timeline of the project through instances where participants’ flexibility to meet or communicate were restricted due to contracting Covid-19. In addition, there were repercussions for my personal situation where I was juggling the demands of the doctorate alongside parenting three children who were unexpectedly not in school for long periods. These demands protracted the length of the project, which I was perhaps most conscious of in terms of maintaining links with the youth participants.

### 7.2.2 Piloting

I decided not to run a pilot focus group on the basis that I hoped to develop the questions with the input of participants which would negate the need for trialling their use. On reflection, I realise that a pilot focus group would have had the additional benefit of allowing me to practise my facilitation skills in this context. As a TEP (and in previous professional roles) I use facilitation skills regularly in my delivery of different forms of consultation and group work. I realised when running the groups however, that I had not fully processed the deliberations I might bring to the facilitation of a research process, such as considerations around the appropriateness of influencing the direction of the discussions. While I recognise the value of reflexivity and being able to draw on my thoughts and feelings, I was also aware that some were merely acting as a distraction. I consider now that reflecting on some of these issues more fully in advance, through holding a pilot focus group, may have supported my confidence in undertaking the role of facilitator during data collection.

### 7.2.3 Sampling

I used a purposive sampling technique, seeking participants from specific groups, with selection based solely on potential participants meeting broad criteria such as age, or length of time practising in the LA. The participants who volunteered all had an interest and positive orientations towards youth participation. The subject positions, subjectivity and the possibilities for action which are highlighted in this research probably reflect the interests and experiences of participants, and whilst I do not think that is a limitation of the research in terms of a qualitative orientation, it is worth exploring the implications.

The young people involved all had positive experiences of working to create systemic change (albeit not with EPs). Other groups of CYP will have a different relationship with the idea of participating in this type of work and could show more resistance, less willingness to work in the system, be less engaged with education generally, or have fewer positive experiences of being listened to and treated as an equal partner. In developing collaborations with wider groups of CYP, EPs may find that the discourses which open the possibilities for action are less accessible. A recommendation is that a precursor to the development EP partnerships with CYP in the context of systemic change, is EPs also supporting the creation of conditions in educational contexts in which CYP have the opportunity to work with adult partners in designing and delivering systemic change.

Another consideration is that the YP involved in this work were all 18-25 years old and in a position to reflect back on their completed youth educational journeys. As the majority of EP practice is with school-age CYP, the application of the results from this study need to take into account the issues surrounding developing partnerships with a range of ages of CYP who are still very much embedded in their education. On the other hand, there is value in developing collaborations with 18-25 years olds, an area of emerging practice for EPs since the extension of the age range we work with through the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015). Furthermore, this demographic of YP also brings the advantage of being able to show some leadership through their positive experiences, as well as being able to reflect back on their experiences of systems.

### 7.2.4 Further Reflection on Quality: Apprenticeship, Scholarship and Innovation

I also feel that I can counter some of the limitations outlined above by fulfilling some of the requirements of quality research identified by Parker (2004), as previously discussed.

In the methodology I reflected on the idea of scholarship and the importance of critiquing the knowledge base through which I am working. I am conscious that I have extended that process throughout the research to the extent that there have been times when I have had to challenge my own understanding of the ideas I am exploring. For instance, I felt uncomfortable re-focusing back on individual CYP given that my earlier critique of the literature had been influenced by an interest in moving away from that perspective. Equally, I found the YPs’ use of a medical discourse surprising, and it left me with a feeling of unease. However, I considered it a strength to be able to maintain my curiosity in the analysis, despite these difficult feelings, in order to scrutinise my own conceptions as well as those of others in the pursuit of quality research.

I have acknowledged that I am new to the profession of educational psychology and that this outsider perspective brings strength to the research in terms of having new ways of thinking about EP practice. I have also reflected on the professional journey I made across the course of this research, and I want to highlight how I attempted to stay reflexive with respect to my gradual identification with educational psychology and the impact of this on the research. This too I consider a strength of the research.

There have been moments throughout this research where I felt my ideas about collaborating with CYP created a sense of discomfort when I discuss them with other EPs. I am open to feedback from others and sometimes found it difficult to move on from these interactions. Through discussion in supervision however, and a thorough consideration of the literature, I decided that these conversations were perhaps more a sign that I was asking new questions which might be valuable as a form of innovation for the profession.

I am also keen to reflect on the role of participants in the research. As already noted, the topic of this research prompted me to consider how I could integrate some form of collaboration with participants in the project. I have been disappointed at times about the emphasis on me as designer, decision-maker and analyst in the research, but I acknowledged that this was a feature of the research at the beginning, and I believe my transparency about the limits of opportunities to participate has been a strength. For instance, I was clear from the start about not collaborating with participants when using FDA, which felt an unfamiliar and complex form of analysis. Whilst it was then interesting to discuss my findings with the EP participants and hear their responses to that, it felt clear to me that I was presenting my findings to them, rather than us engaging in any form of shared analysis, as I had explicitly expressed this to them several times.

I am interested in the way this resonates with a study by Marks (1993), who reflects on a feedback session with participants from a discourse analysis of an educational case conference. In that case, the feedback was designed almost as a layer of the analysis, where the researcher’s perspectives could be analysed by participants. Marks describes the session as difficult and reflects on the idea that the feedback event perhaps simply reconstructed some of the subject positions of the original case conference. Reflecting on this Marks (1993) comments:

“Pseudocollaboration reinforces the problematic power differentiated between academics who gain (publications, research grants) from the project and educationalist and education consumers who are exploited (in terms of their time and energy) by the research.”

(p. 150)

As I reflect on Marks’ (1993) perspectives, I have a sense of relief that I provided clarity around the limits and purpose of participants’ role in the research. Again, I feel this was a strength of the research.

## 7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

I am interested in the possibility of developing this research through further projects. Feedback from the participants suggests that there is an interest in applying some of what we have learned in practice, perhaps through an action research model where we continue to explore the possibilities through collaborative projects with CYP. Certainly, as this project proceeded, I noted the limits of bringing the groups into dialogue and I am interested in extending the possibilities of an action research approach beyond what was possible within the timescales of this research. I am hopeful that future research opportunities will allow further exploration of the potential partnership between EPs and CYP in the context of systemic change, at group and organisational levels.

Reflecting on the strengths and limitations of the project, it would be interesting for future research to build links with CYP who are still in education or training and who have current involvement in the wide range of systems in which EPs are involved. These areas could include local SEND systems in schools and colleges including school policies and procedures around support for CYP with SEND, as well as wider systems which address issues such as school exclusions or the development of universal services to support the health and wellbeing of CYP.

A reflection as the project has continued has been whether it was useful to focus on SEND systems, or if that served to emphasise the assessment role of the EP. My decision to do that was perhaps influenced by my experience of educational psychology practice, where there has been an emphasis on our role in the assessment of SEND in school systems. Considering the application of community psychology principles in educational psychology described by Stringer et al. (2006), there is an argument for understanding the EP role as spanning a wider range of systems. As these authors suggest, these might include systems relating to adoption and fostering, supervisory support for staff, or our collaborations with Youth Offending Teams. Nevertheless, it felt positive to work collaboratively with YP who had experience of the SEND systems and to explore the implications of EPs working in new ways with those YP. As the research highlights, the history of the EP role in relation to CYP has an important part to play in maintaining legal and medical discourses of not only the relationship but the SEND system itself. It has been useful to explore how different constructions of that relationship can change the way we understand the systems in which the relationship is often located.

This is perhaps an appropriate point in the discussion in which to return to the issue of epistemology and ontology. I noted in the Methodology that I have located this research within a ‘weak’ social constructionist framework, which Harper (2012) suggests can be understood as “Critical realist social constructionism” (p. 92). As I unpacked in the Methodology, I have used FDA as I am interested in the way in which it suggests that the discourses we use are those available to us depending on our social and political context. In the context of this research, I am particularly interested in how the discourses drawn upon are impacted by the shared SEND systems within which participants are acting. As I reflect on the findings and my interpretation of them, I am also struck by the way in which the YPs’ navigation of the discourses available to them in SEND systems has successfully provided us all the opportunity to reconstruct what we understand of those systems and how we can relate within them. It has been useful to explore the context in which discourses are drawn from, yet the findings also emphasise that these contexts are constructed. My interpretation of this finding is a final assertion of the social constructionist approach I have taken to this research.

## 7.4 Personal Reflections

This project has been rooted in my own professional development experiences and as I reach the end, I can see the experiences that have led me here as well as the roads that lead into the future. I have been listening to and considering with an active curiosity, the everyday conversations I have about EPs’ work with CYP and participation, and systemic work, for what feels like a long time. Having the space and time to explore these issues in such depth has been a wonderful opportunity to apply that curiosity more extensively. It has felt like a treat to be allowed to record and study these conversations and for that I am very grateful to the participants in the project.

There have been times when I have considered if my interest in this research could reflect a difficulty in letting go of my previous professional identity, and an elaborate attempt to squeeze educational psychology into a youth work shaped box. I am also conscious of my changing professional identity over the course of the research and as I have transitioned into the world of educational psychology, I have been pleasantly surprised by the receptiveness of EP colleagues to the ideas I bring from youth work and informal education. I think the results of the research also suggest that there is an appetite in educational psychology for different ways of relating to CYP and that there is scope within the profession for developing those practices. As I consider my journey with this research, I feel pleased that the curiosity I developed through my perception of the contrast between my previous work and the profession of educational psychology has prompted interesting and useful questions. I now have at least one foot firmly in educational psychology and have developed confidence in the value I can bring from my previous experiences. Carrying out this research, rather than constraining me within an earlier career, has developed my curiosity even further about what educational psychology can learn from other professional areas.

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# Appendix A: Recruitment Information

**Recruitment Procedure**

***Educational psychologist participants***

I attended EP team meeting to outline the project and ask for volunteers.

Information sheets and consent forms distributed to all team members.

Follow up emails sent as a reminder.

Interested EPs returned consent forms.

Individual meetings held to explain the project in more detail and for the potential participants to ask questions.

***Youth participants***

Contact made with professional who worked with the youth group and discussion with them to discuss the project viability in terms of group availability and their potential interest.

Video call meeting with the whole youth group to introduce myself and the project idea.

Distribution of information sheets and consent forms (including parent/carer information sheets and consent forms) via the professional contact.

Additional information distributed in alternative formats – PowerPoint with voiceover, and electronic consent forms (using Google Forms).

Young people returned consent forms.

Individual video calls with each young person, as an information sharing tool and as a key part of the consent process (as discussed in ‘ethical considerations’ in Research Design).

# Appendix B: Summary Information Sheet for Parents and Carers

Making Connections Research Project

Summary Information for Parents and Carers

**Who am I?**

My name is Judith Kelso. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist doing my training in [place name]. This research project is part of my studies with the University of Sheffield.

**What?**

I am interested in how young people and educational psychologists can work together to make changes to the ways children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are supported.

The project will ask young people from [youth group name] to talk to educational psychologists about what they do as part of their group. The educational psychologists will talk to the young people about their work. We will think about what everybody says as a way of understanding how they might work together in the future.

The project is mainly three group conversations, which will be recorded. One group conversation is just for young people and one just for educational psychologists. The third one will be for young people and educational psychologists together.

All the group conversations will happen online, using Google Meet video calls.

The project is called ‘participatory’ because there will be some meetings where we make decisions about how to run the project, which your child can choose to take part in.

**Who?**

I would like 4 or 5 young people from [youth group name] to take part, aged between 11-25 years.

There will also be 3 educational psychologists taking part.

**When?**

Most of the project will happen between October 2021 and January 2022. Some of it might take part in June/July 2022, which your child can choose to take part in, or not.

**How?**

For your child to take part, they need to fill in and email me the young person’s consent form as well as the filled-in parent/carer consent form.

My email address is \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

*Thanks for your interest.*

*There is more detailed information about the project below, which it is important you read.*

# Appendix C: Information Sheet for Parents and Carers

**Making Connections Research Project**

**Further Information for Parents and Carers**

How Young People and Educational Psychologists Can Work Together to Make Changes to the Ways Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are Supported

**Does your child have to take part?**

You and your child can decide if they want to take part.

**Finding out more about taking part**

\*If there are no places left, your child can go on a waiting list. They could be offered a place if another participant drops out before the project begins.

The project needs at least 4 young people to go ahead. If fewer than 4 young people want to take part, the project will not go ahead in this area and your child will not be able to take part.

**What if your child changes their mind about taking part?**

Your child can stop taking part at any time. You and your child do not have to give a reason if they choose to stop taking part. If you want your child to stop taking part, please contact me by email.

If your child stops taking part after the group conversations have happened, what they said will be included in the research report, but it will be made anonymous, so that nobody will know what your child said.

**What will be involved in taking part?**

All research activities will happen online, using Google Meet video calls.

No travel will be involved, and so no money will be given for travel.

This project is called ‘participatory’. That means everybody taking part can help make decisions about parts of the project. If people disagree, I will make final decisions.

**Project activities**

1. **Meeting 1 (optional) 1 hour**

* Just for young people
* Everybody can help decide what we will talk about in the two group conversations.

**2. Young people’s group conversation (1.5 hours)**

* Just for young people
* Group conversation
* Talking about what they do with the youth forum.
* Deciding what to tell educational psychologists about their group activities

**3. Young people and educational psychologists’ joint group conversation (1.5 hours)**

* Young people tell educational psychologists about their group activities
* Educational psychologists tell young people about their work
* Whole group talk about educational psychologists and young people working together in the future



**4. Talking about what we have learned (optional) 1.5 hours**

* I will tell the group what I think we can learn from studying our conversations.
* Everybody can tell me if they think I should include any other ideas or take any out.
* We will talk about who might like to hear about the research.

**5. Events to tell people about the research (optional)**

* Everybody can join in these if they want to
* Some events will be part of my studies, so I will do these on my own.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Risk** | **What I will do to make the risk smaller** |
| **Being online**  Could see something upsetting on the screen  Not feeling able to take part | Give everybody ideas at the beginning about how to stay safe  A staff member could be online too  All young people will be asked to have an adult with them when they are online |
| **Filling in forms** could take some children longer which could upset them. | I will set a date for sending the forms back that gives everybody lots of time to fill them out. |
| **Contact with educational psychologists**  It could be confusing if for your child if one of the educational psychologists (including me) has supported them with their education in the past. They could also support them in the future. | I will explain to young people that educational psychologists are not taking part to help your child with their education.  I will explain that if your child meets one of the educational psychologists in the future, it will not be linked to this research.  If you have any questions, you can email me. |
| **Time**  Taking part will take some time and could affect your child’s learning if it happens in their normal learning time.  Parents/carers will also have to give some time to support your child to take part. | I will ask everybody taking part when the best time is to have the project meetings.  I will make sure young people’s learning is the main thing we think about when we decide when to have the project meetings. |
| **Disagreements**  Sometimes people disagree about things in conversations, which could be upsetting.  Somebody might talk about something which your child finds upsetting. | I will ask a staff member from the youth forum to be online and support young people.  I ask that an adult family member/carer is with your child when they are online. |

**Good things about taking part?**

Young people taking part will not gain anything from taking part straight away. I hope this project will help educational psychologists and young people work together in the future. This might mean that we can make positive changes to SEND systems, in \*\*\*\*\*\* and other places.

**Giving consent to take part**

If your child is 17 years old or younger, they need a consent form signed by a parent or carer.

If they do not have a signed parent/carer consent form, they will not be able to take part. This is University of Sheffield policy.

Your child will also be asked to fill in a young person’s consent form, to show that they would like to take part.

It is important to know that if your child chooses to take part in this research, it will not be a legal agreement between you and your child and the University of Sheffield. It will also not mean that you or your child has a job with the University of Sheffield.

**Keeping things confidential**

All the information that I collect about your child during the research will be kept strictly confidential. Only I will be able to see or hear the information.

If I ask to share project information with other researchers, this will not include your child’s personal information, unless you and your child say you want me to.

Nobody will be able to tell your child has taken part by reading anything we write about the research, unless your child says they want that.

At the end of the project, if your child wants to take part in activities where we tell people about the research, the people listening will know your child has taken part. They will not know what your child said in the research group conversations though.

I ask that your child does not tell anybody outside of the project what is talked about in the group conversations. This will help make sure the information everybody shares is kept confidential.

**Making recordings**

Video and sound recordings of the group conversations will made with Google Meet.

We might decide to use other ways of recording the conversations, like online whiteboards.

**What will happen to the information collected?**

All the information collected, like sound and video recordings and any other ways of recording our discussions, will be saved securely on my University of Sheffield Google Drive. Only I will be able to see or hear them.

The information collected will not be used in any other way without asking for your written permission. No one outside the project will be allowed to see or hear the original recordings.

I will delete all the saved information one month after I have finished the final report.

Other researchers might be interested in using the project information for their research projects. I will only share it with them if you give your consent for that.

**What is the legal basis for processing personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, I am required to inform you that the legal basis I am applying in order to process your child’s personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University’s Privacy Notice <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

I will write a report called a thesis for my qualification (Doctorate in Educational Psychology).

I might also publish a report about the project in a journal. If this happens, you will be told. Your child will be given a copy of this report if they want it.

Nobody reading any reports will know who took part, what groups took part or what local authority the project was in.

At the end of the project, I will give your child a short report about the project.

I will tell people in the local authority about what we have learned.

I will tell staff and students at the University of Sheffield about the project.

I will ask everybody taking part who else might like to hear about the research.

**What if something goes wrong? How to make a complaint about the research, or report a concern?**

If you are unhappy with any part of the research and want to make a complaint, please contact me first \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

If you are not pleased with how your complaint has been dealt with you can contact the Head of the School of Education, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

If you want to make a complaint about how your child’s personal information has been handled, the University’s Privacy Notice tells you how to make a complaint: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

If you wish to make a report of a concern or incident relating to potential exploitation, abuse or harm resulting from your child taking part in this project, please contact the project’s Designated Safeguarding Contact, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*. If the concern or incident is about the Designated Safeguarding Contact, or if you feel a report you have made to this Contact has not been handled in a satisfactory way, please contact the Head of the School of Education, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* and/or the University’s Research Ethics & Integrity Manager \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is organised through the University of Sheffield.

**Who is the Data Controller?**

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your child’s information and using it properly.

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield’s Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the School of Education at the University of Sheffield.

**Contact for further information**

Thank you for your interest in this project. Should you wish any more information please contact me by email at \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

Alternatively, you can contact my Research Supervisor, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

**Please keep a copy of this information sheet for your own records. Should your child wish to take part in the research, please ask them to return a signed copy of their consent form, as well as a signed copy of the parent/carer consent form by email.**

# Appendix D: Consent Form for Parents and Carers

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**Consent form for parents/carers of participants under 18 years old**

Research project: Educational psychologists and young people working together in SEND systems.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Please tick the appropriate boxes*** | | | | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Taking Part in the Project** | | | |  |  |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 30/11/21 and I fully understand the project my child will be participating in. (If you will answer No to this question, please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.) | | | |  |  |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | | | |  |  |
| I agree for my child to take part in the project. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that my child’s participation in the project will include participating in two recorded online focus groups: one of these will be with only young people aged 11-25 years old, the other will be a mix of educational psychologists and young people aged 11-25 years old. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that as this is a participatory research project, my child also has the opportunity to take part in the following activities (they can take part in all, some, or none of these):  - A discussion about the research and questions, and questions/prompts for the focus groups  - A discussion about the analysis of the data  - A discussion about how the results of the research are disseminated  - Participating in some dissemination activities (although none that are part of Judith Kelso's assessed work for her DEdCPsy training) | | | |  |  |
| I agree that while my child is participating in online research activities, I will ensure a trusted adult is in the same building as, and available to my child, should they need support. | | | |  |  |
| I agree that whilst my child is participating in focus groups, video recordings will be made. I agree to my child being video recorded and for these anonymised video recordings to be used in the research. | | | |  |  |
| I agree that whilst I my child is participating in the focus groups, audio recordings will be made. I agree to my child being audio recorded and for transcripts of these anonymised audio recordings to be used in the research. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that by choosing to allow my child to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship between me or my child and the University of Sheffield. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that my child taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw them from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want them to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw them. If I withdraw them from the project after they participate in a focus groups, I will not be able to withdraw their data. | | | |  |  |
| **How my information will be used during and after the project** | | | |  |  |
| I understand my child’s personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. The only exception to this is if I consent for them to take part in dissemination activities, in which case their name will be known to people outside the project, although not their specific contributions to focus group discussions. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that my child’s words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that my child will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that if I withdraw my child from the project after taking part in the focus groups, I will not be able to withdraw their data; everything they say in the focus groups will be anonymous, so nobody outside of the project will know what they said in the focus groups. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my child’s data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | | |  |  |
| **So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers** | | | |  |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | | | | |
| Name of participant [printed]  Name of parent/carer [printed] | Signature  Signature | | Date  Date | | | |
|  |  |  | | | | |
| Name of Researcher [printed] | Signature | | Date | | | |
|  |  |  | | | | |

**Parent/carer contact details**

Contact telephone number:

Contact email address:

**Project contact details for further information:**

Lead Researcher

Judith Kelso

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Research Supervisor

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Head of School of Education at the University of Sheffield

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

The School of Education, The University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2GW

Please ask your child to return this completed consent form, as well their own completed consent form, by email to Judith Kelso \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***,** AFTER 07/12/21.

Places will be given to the first 5 people to return their parent/carer consent forms AFTER this date. Returning this consent form will indicate that you agree for your child to take part in the research project and places will be given on a first come, first served basis. On receipt of the consent form, I will contact you to let you know if a place is available for your child on the project and if not, you will be offered the opportunity for them to go on a waiting list to take part.

Please note that I have also distributed consent forms for young people to complete, in order for them to indicate their interest in taking part. Participation for all young people aged 17 and under requires consent from their parent/carer. In circumstances where a young person indicates an interest in taking part by returning a consent form, but they do not return a signed parent/carer consent form, they will not be able to take part.

# Appendix E: Information Sheet for EPs

Information Sheet for Educational Psychologists

**Research Project Title:**

How young people and educational psychologists can work together to make changes to the ways children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are supported.

My name is Judith Kelso and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Sheffield, studying for a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology (DEdCPsy).

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide if you want to participate, 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. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you wish to take part.

*Thank you for reading this.*

**Project purpose**

The project is being carried out as part of my Doctorate in Educational Psychology at the University of Sheffield and will be finished by July 2022.

The research aims to explore the relationship between educational psychologists (EPs) and communities of young people when they are both active in making changes to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) systems. The project will bring the two groups together to facilitate them discussing and learning about each other's experiences. Furthermore, it is hoped we can consider how groups of young people and EPs can work together to make changes to SEND systems.

I am taking a participatory approach to the research, which means all participants will have the opportunity to take part in making decisions about parts of the research. As this research is being used as part of the assessment for my course however, some parts of the research will be carried out only by me.

I am hoping to recruit 3 EPs, and between 4 and 5 young people from a SEND participation group. All participants will be from the same local authority, so everybody has experience of the same SEND systems.

**Why have you been approached?**

You have been approached to take part because you are an Educational Psychologist who has worked for at least 3 months in the same local authority as a SEND youth participation group.

**Do you have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide if you want to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form and you can still withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. You do not have to give a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the research, please contact me (Judith Kelso). It will not be possible for your data to be withdrawn after the focus groups have been carried out, as the data will be transcribed and anonymised.

Please note that that by choosing to participate in this research, this will not create a legally binding agreement, nor is it intended to create an employment relationship between you and the University of Sheffield.

**What will be involved in taking part?**

All research activities will be conducted online, using Google Meet video calls.

No extensive travel will be involved, and no travel expenses will be available.

Procedures for finding out more about the project and applying to take part

\*In the event of no places being available, you will be offered a place on a waiting list and could be offered a place if another participant drops out before the project begins.

If it is not possible to recruit 3 educational psychologists with 3 months experience of practice in this local authority, the project will be relocated to another area. Young people will not be recruited until EP places have been allocated, in order to reduce the potential for disappointment at not being able to take part.

If you choose to take part, most parts of the project you will be involved in, will happen in the school autumn term 2021. If you choose to be involved in the dissemination of the research, this will happen in summer term 2022. The project is taking a participatory approach because it is exploring the topic of young people's participation and EPs collaborating with young people, and so the methods reflect that aim. This means that participants can be involved in making decisions about the project. In instances where there are irresolvable disagreements between participants, I will make final decisions.

All participants will take part in two focus groups. For EPs this will be one focus group with only EPs, and one focus group with both EPs and young people. There are other parts of the project which you can choose to take part in. Specifically, once you have been allocated a place, you will have the opportunity to take part in:

Session 1 – up to 1 hour (optional)

**Online Google Meet meeting to discuss the research aims and research questions**. We will use this discussion to decide what would be useful to discuss in the focus groups (only the focus groups you will be involved in). This meeting will just be with other EPs from your local authority team, who have also decided to take part.

Session 2 – up to 1.5 hours (**for all EPs to take part in**)

**Online focus group**, with other educational psychologist participants. This will be an open discussion, broadly on the topic of your work with SEND systems and your contact with young people as part of this, guided by the prompts we had decided together in session 1. As part of this session, the group will be invited to think about how to communicate the key themes from the discussion to the young people in the next focus group. The young people will have a separate group and will also choose what and how to communicate their key themes to you.

Session 3 – up to 1.5 hours (**for all EPs and youth participants to take part in**)

**Online focus group**, with 3 EPs and 5 young people from the SEND participation group. There is a deliberate balance of numbers in favour of young people, to support young people to feel confident in expressing themselves. Young people and EPs will have the opportunity to tell each other what they discussed in their previous group and then discuss their responses to these themes. It is also hoped we can consider the implications of these discussions for EPs’ work with groups of young people, in effecting changes to SEND systems.

Session 4 – up to 1.5 hours (**optional**)

**Online session to discuss the analysis of the research data**. In this session I will bring my analysis of the data (data will include the summaries of discussions from the separate EP and young people’s focus groups, and a transcript of the third focus group, as well as my research diary) for us to discuss. This will be an opportunity for you to comment on my analysis, and for us to discuss any potential changes.

We will also discuss our ideas about who might be interested in hearing about the research and how to communicate it to them.

Dissemination activities **(optional)**

**Dissemination activities** will be arranged based on our discussions in session 4, and all participants can be involved in these if they choose to. The only dissemination activities not available to participants will be those for which I am being assessed as part of my DEdCPsy qualification.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

You will be working with young people who may have had previous involvement, or could have future involvement, with an educational psychologist, on a casework basis (and you could have been/could be the EP involved). The nature of your working relationship with young people on this project, will not be on a casework basis, and will be purely for the purpose of collaborating in research. The change in role, however, could be confusing for young people, which could impact on your role. Youth participants will be prepared for this eventuality in information provided prior to getting involved, where it will be explained that taking part in this research project will not change the nature of future professional involvement. After the research is finished, your research relationship will be finished. If you meet any of the young people in a professional capacity in the future, it will not be linked to, or affected by, this research.

The project will require some of your time to take part (for full details see above), which could impact on your workload. We will discuss the timing of research activities at the beginning of the project, to try and limit the impact on your time and workload. Priority in timings will be given to ensuring the safeguarding of young people.

There is the potential for disagreement between participants in research related discussions, or for the content of discussions to affect your feelings. I suggest you use the supervisory arrangements in your Educational Psychology Service as a confidential and appropriate place to talk about your feelings regarding participating in the research.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work could support future collaborations between EPs and young people in effecting meaningful changes to SEND systems, in both this local authority and elsewhere.

**Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information that I collect about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential and will only be accessible to me. You will not be identifiable in any reports or publications unless you have given your explicit consent for this. If you agree to me sharing the information you provide with other researchers (e.g. by making it available in a data archive) then your personal details will not be included unless you explicitly request this. Given the participatory approach of this research, you will have the opportunity to take part in dissemination activities. In doing so, your identity as a participant will be known to people external to the project, however, the data will be anonymised and therefore your personal data which is included in the project will not be known to others.

I ask that you do not share any information with anybody else that is discussed in the focus groups or other research discussions, to protect the confidentiality of all those taking part.

**Recording of data**

The group discussions will be recorded via Google Meet (video and audio recordings) so that we can remember what was said, but I will destroy the recordings once we have finished the research project and I have written the thesis.

The focus groups will be recorded via Google Meet, as a record of the discussions and to aid accessibility of access during analysis. I will destroy the recordings once we have finished the research project and I have written the thesis.

If we use any other means to record our discussions, such as online whiteboards, I will save the content of these securely on Google Drive. Only I will have access to them, and I will destroy them after we have finished the research project and I have written the thesis.

The audio and/or video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

**What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to data protection legislation, I am required to inform you that the legal basis I am applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University’s Privacy Notice <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

**What will happen to the data collected?**

All data collected, including but not limited to, the audio recordings and/or video recordings and any other means of recording our discussions, will be stored securely on my University of Sheffield Google Drive. All data will be destroyed within one month of completion of the project.

Due to the nature of this research, it is very likely that other researchers may find the data collected to be useful in answering future research questions. We will ask for your explicit consent for your data to be shared in this way.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The results of the project will be included in a thesis, for my Doctorate in Educational Psychology and may also be used for publication in a journal. You, and the local authority for which you work, will not be identifiable in any reports of the work. Once the thesis is complete and has been approved by the university, a summary of the research will be provided for you. Should the research be published in a journal, you will be informed, and you will be provided with a copy should you wish it. Findings will be shared with those interested in the local authority and also with staff and students at the University of Sheffield. We will discuss as part of the research, if there are any other people you think would be interested in hearing about the project.

**What if something goes wrong and I wish to complain about the research or report a concern or incident?**

It you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the research and wish to make a complaint, please contact Judith Kelso \*\*\*\*\*\*\* in the first instance. If you feel your complaint has not been handled in a satisfactory way you can contact the Head of the School of Education, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*. If the complaint relates to how your personal data has been handled, you can find information about how to raise a complaint in the University’s Privacy Notice: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general.

If you wish to make a report of a concern or incident relating to potential exploitation, abuse or harm resulting from your involvement in this project, please contact the project’s Designated Safeguarding Contact, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*. If the concern or incident relates to the Designated Safeguarding Contact, or if you feel a report you have made to this Contact has not been handled in a satisfactory way, please contact the Head of the School of Education, \*\*\*\*\*\*\* and/or the University’s Research Ethics & Integrity Manager \*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is organised through the University of Sheffield.

**Who is the Data Controller?**

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is responsible for looking after your information and using it properly.

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield’s Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by the School of Education at the University of Sheffield.

**Contact for further information**

Thank you for your interest in this project. Should you wish any more information please contact me by email at \*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

Alternatively, you can contact my Research Supervisor, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

**Please keep a copy of this information sheet for your own records. Should you wish to take part in the research, please return a copy of the consent form.**

# Appendix F: Consent form for EPs

**Consent form for Educational Psychologist Participants**

Research project: Educational psychologists and young people working together in SEND systems.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Please tick the appropriate boxes*** | | | | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Taking Part in the Project** | | | |  |  |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 19/11/2021 and the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question, please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.) | | | |  |  |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | | | |  |  |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include participating in two recorded online focus groups: one of these will be with only educational psychologists, the other will be a mix of educational psychologists and young people aged 11-25 years old. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that as this is a participatory research project, I also have the opportunity to take part in the following activities (I can take part in all, some, or none of these):  - A discussion about the research and questions, and questions/prompts for the focus groups  - A discussion about the analysis of the data  - A discussion about how the results of the research are disseminated  - Participating in some dissemination activities (although none that are part of Judith Kelso's assessed work for her DEdCPsy training) | | | |  |  |
| I agree that whilst I am participating in focus groups, video recordings will be made. I agree to being video recorded and for these anonymised video recordings to be used in the research. | | | |  |  |
| I agree that whilst I am participating in the focus groups, audio recordings will be made. I agree to being audio recorded and for transcripts of these anonymised audio recordings to be used in the research. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that by choosing to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship with the University of Sheffield. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw. If I withdraw from the project after participating in the focus groups, I will not be able to withdraw my data. | | | |  |  |
| **How my information will be used during and after the project** | | | |  |  |
| I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. The only exception to this is if I choose to take part in dissemination activities, in which case my name will be known to people outside the project, although not my specific contributions to focus group discussions. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that if I withdraw from the project after taking part in the focus groups, I will not be able to withdraw my data; everything I say in the focus groups will be anonymous, so nobody outside of the project will know what I said in the focus groups. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | | |  |  |
| **So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers** | | | |  |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | | | | |
| Name of participant [printed] | Signature | | Date | | | |
|  |  |  | | | | |
| Name of Researcher [printed] | Signature | | Date | | | |
|  |  |  | | | | |

**Project contact details for further information:**

Lead Researcher

Judith Kelso

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Research Supervisor

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Head of School of Education at the University of Sheffield

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

The School of Education, The University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2GW

Please return this consent form by email to Judith Kelso \*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Returning your consent form will indicate you volunteering to take part in the research project and places will be given on a first come, first served basis, to the first three people returning their forms. On receipt of the consent form, I will contact you to let you know if a place is available on the project and if not, you will be offered the opportunity to go on a waiting list to take part.

# Appendix G: Summary Information Sheet for YP



# Appendix H: Information Sheet for YP

**Making ConnectionsResearch Project**

**More Information for Young People**

**Project activities**

All the activities will happen online, using Google Meet video calls.

You do not need to travel, so there will be no money for travel.

1. **Meeting 1 (optional) 1 hour**

* Just for young people
* Everybody can help decide what we will talk about in the two young people’s group conversations.

**2. Young people’s group conversation (1.5 hours)**

* Just for young people
* Group conversation
* Talking about what you do with \*\*\*\*\*\*\*
* Deciding what to tell educational psychologists about \*\*\*\*\*\* activities
* Deciding what you want to ask educational psychologists

**3. Young people and educational psychologists’ joint group conversation (1.5 hours)**

* Young people tell educational psychologists about \*\*\*\*\*\*\* activities
* Educational psychologists tell young people about their work
* The whole group will talk about educational psychologists and young people working together in the future



**4. Talking about what we have learned (optional) 1.5 hours**

* I will tell the group what I think we can learn from studying our conversations.
* Everybody can tell me if they think I should include any other ideas or take any out.
* We will talk about who might like to hear about the research.

**5. Events to tell people about the research (optional)**

* Everybody can join in these if they want to
* Some events will be part of my studies, so I will do these on my own.

**A picture containing linedrawing, clipart

Description automatically generatedDo you have to take part?**

You can choose if you want to take part in the project.

**Icon

Description automatically generatedChanging your mind**

If you change your mind about taking part, you do not have to say why. You can email me at [\*\*\*\*\*\*\*](mailto:jkelso1@sheffield.ac.uk)

You can also speak to a youth worker, or your parent or carer, who can let me know.

If you change your mind after taking part in the group conversations, what you said might be included in the research report, but nobody will know you said it.

**Icon

Description automatically generated**

**Finding out more about taking part**

The project needs at least 4 young people to go ahead. If 4 young people do not want to take part, the project will not happen in this area, and you will not be able to take part.

A yellow triangle sign

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**Risks from taking part**

**A picture containing text, clipart

Description automatically generated Being online**

Feeling nervous or confused about what you see and hear

* I will give you ideas about how to stay safe and feel comfortable.
* I will ask [staff name] to be online too.
* It is important that you have a parent or carer with you during meetings.
* If you are over 18 this could be a trusted friend.

Not feeling able to take part

**Icon

Description automatically generatedFilling in forms**

It could be upsetting if it takes you a long time to fill out the consent form.

* I will make sure there is plenty time to fill out the consent form.

**A picture containing diagram

Description automatically generatedWorking with educational psychologists**

It could be confusing if the educational psychologists have helped you with your education before this project. Or if they help you after this project.

* We will talk about how taking part in this project is different to getting help with your education.
* If you have any questions about why you are working with educational psychologists you can ask me in the information sessions, or by email.

**Time**

**A blue clock with black hands

Description automatically generated with low confidence**

* We will talk about the best times to have the meetings.

If the meetings happen in school or work time, you might have less time for learning, or work.

**Talking about things which upset you**

You might have different ideas to somebody else and have an argument.

**A picture containing clipart

Description automatically generated**

* We could talk about anything that upsets you
* You will have an adult online to support you
* You will also have an adult at home to speak to

**A picture containing clipart

Description automatically generated**

**Consent**

* If you are younger than 18, you need your parents/carers to sign a consent form.
* If you do not have a signed parent/carer consent form you will not be allowed to take part.
* You also need to fill in a consent form to show you want to take part.
* If you choose to take part in this research it will not mean you have a job with the University of Sheffield. It is not a legal agreement with the University.

Icon

Description automatically generated

**Keeping things confidential**

* I will keep all personal information about you safe.
* I might use your words in my report, but I will never use your name. Adults helping with the project will know who said what.
* You do not need to tell the educational psychologists who said what in the young people’s focus group.
* Please do not tell anybody outside the project who said what.
* If you say something that makes me feel worried about you or somebody else, I might need to tell another adult. This is to make sure everyone is kept safe.
* If I share information from the project with anybody, I will never tell them your personal details.
* If you take part in activities telling other people about the research, the people listening will know you have taken part.

A picture containing logo

Description automatically generated

**What are the good things about taking part?**

* The project could help young people and educational psychologists work together in the future. This could make a difference to SEND systems.
* The project will not help you while you are taking part.

Icon

Description automatically generated

**Recordings**

* Everything we talk about will be recorded on Google Meet. I will save recordings on my university Google Drive.
* I will delete the recordings when I have written the reports.
* If we write down what we say, I will save this on my Google Drive. Only I will be able to see what we save. I will delete these when I have written my reports.

**The Legal Stuff**

There are some important pieces of information I would like to tell you about taking part in the project. You might want to ask an adult to help you understand them.

**What is the legal basis for processing my personal data?**

According to laws about looking after your personal information, I have to tell you that the legal basis I am applying in order to process your personal data is that ‘processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest’ (Article 6(1)(e)). Further information can be found in the University’s Privacy Notice <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

**What will happen to the information collected?**

All the information collected, like sound and video recordings and any other ways of recording our discussions, will be saved securely on my University of Sheffield Google Drive. Only I will be able to see or hear them.

The information collected will not be used in any other way without asking for your written permission. If you are under 18, I will also ask your parents/carers if they agree. No one outside the project will be allowed to see or hear the original recordings.

I will delete all the saved information one month after I have finished the final report.

Other researchers might be interested in using the project information for their research projects. I will only share it with them if you give your consent for that (and your parents/carers’ consent if you are under 18).

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

I will write a report called a thesis for my qualification (Doctorate in Educational Psychology).

I might also publish a report about the project in a magazine called a journal. If this happens, you will be told. You can have a copy of this report.

Nobody reading any reports will know your name (unless you want them to). They won’t know the name of your group or the area the group is from.

At the end, I will give you a short report about the project.

I will tell people in the local authority about what we have learned.

I will tell staff and students at the University of Sheffield about the project.

All of us taking part might decide to tell other people about the project.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is organised through the University of Sheffield.

**Who is the Data Controller?**

The University of Sheffield will act as the Data Controller for this study. This means that the University is in charge of looking after your information and using it properly.

**Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via the University of Sheffield’s Ethics Review Procedure, as administered by The School of Education at the University of Sheffield.

**What if something goes wrong? How to make a complaint about the research, or report a concern?**

If you are unhappy with any part of the research and want to make a complaint, please contact me first of all \*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

If you are not pleased with how your complaint has been dealt with you can contact the Head of the School of Education \*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

If you want to make a complaint about how your personal information has been handled, the University’s Privacy Notice tells you how to make a complaint: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general>.

If you have worries, or something has happened that is to do with potential exploitation, abuse or harm, linked to taking part in this project, please contact the project’s Designated Safeguarding Contact \*\*\*\*\*\*\*. If the concern or incident is about the Designated Safeguarding Contact, or if you feel a report you have made to this Contact has not been handled in a way you are happy with, please contact the Head of the School of Education, \*\*\*\*\*\*\* and/or the University’s Research Ethics & Integrity Manager \*\*\*\*\*\*\*.

**Contact for further information**

Thank you for your interest in this project. If you want any more information, please contact me by email at \*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Or you can email my Research Supervisor, \*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**Please keep a copy of this information sheet. If you want to take part in the research, please email a filled-in copy of the consent form, as well as a filled-in parent/carer consent form (if you are aged 17 or younger).**

# Appendix I: Consent form for YP



**Consent form for Youth Participants**

Research project: Educational psychologists and young people working together in SEND systems.

**For participants aged 17-years-old and younger, it is necessary for a parent/carer consent form to be completed as well as a young person's consent form, in order to take part.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Please tick the appropriate boxes*** | | | | **Yes** | **No** |
| **Taking Part in the Project** | | | |  |  |
| I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 29/11/21 and the project has been fully explained to me. (If you will answer No to this question, please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean.) | | | |  |  |
| I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | | | |  |  |
| I agree to take part in the project. I understand that taking part in the project will include participating in two recorded online focus groups: one of these will be with only young people aged 11-25 years old, the other will be a mix of young people aged 11-25 years old and educational psychologists. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that as this is a participatory research project, I also have the opportunity to take part in the following activities (I can take part in all, some, or none of these):  - A discussion about the research and questions, and questions/prompts for the focus groups  - A discussion about the analysis of the data  - A discussion about how the results of the research are disseminated  - Participating in some dissemination activities (although none that are part of Judith Kelso's assessed work for her DEdCPsy training) | | | |  |  |
| I agree that while I am participating in online research activities, I will have a trusted adult in the same building as, and available to me, in case I need emotional support. | | | |  |  |
| I agree that whilst I am participating in focus groups, video recordings will be made. I agree to being video recorded and for these anonymised video recordings to be used in the research. | | | |  |  |
| I agree that whilst I am participating in the focus groups, audio recordings will be made. I agree to being audio recorded and for transcripts of these anonymised audio recordings to be used in the research. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that by choosing to participate as a volunteer in this research, this does not create a legally binding agreement nor is it intended to create an employment relationship with the University of Sheffield. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time; I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw. If I withdraw from the project after participating in a focus groups, I will not be able to withdraw my data. | | | |  |  |
| **How my information will be used during and after the project** | | | |  |  |
| I understand my personal details such as name, phone number, address and email address etc. will not be revealed to people outside the project. The only exception to this is if I choose to take part in dissemination activities, in which case my name will be known to people outside the project, although not my specific contributions to focus group discussions. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. I understand that I will not be named in these outputs unless I specifically request this. | | | |  |  |
| I understand that if I withdraw from the project after taking part in the focus groups, I will not be able to withdraw my data; everything I say in the focus groups will be anonymous, so nobody outside of the project will know what I said in the focus groups. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | | |  |  |
| I understand and agree that other authorised researchers may use my data in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. | | | |  |  |
| **So that the information you provide can be used legally by the researchers** | | | |  |  |
| I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials generated as part of this project to The University of Sheffield. | | | |  |  |
|  |  |  | | | | |
| Name of participant [printed] | Signature | | Date | | | |
|  |  |  | | | | |
| Name of Researcher [printed] | Signature | | Date | | | |
|  |  |  | | | | |

**Project contact details for further information:**

Lead Researcher

Judith Kelso

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Research Supervisor

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Head of School of Education at the University of Sheffield

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

The School of Education, The University of Sheffield, 241 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2GW

Please return this consent form by email to Judith Kelso **\*\*\*\*\*\*\*,** AFTER 07/12/21.

Places will be given to the first 5 people to return their consent forms AFTER this date. When you email me your form that will let me know that you want to take part. If you are aged 17 years or under, you also need to send me a signed copy of the parent/carer consent form. When I receive these, I will contact you to let you know if a place is available on the project. If all the places have already been allocated, you will be offered the opportunity to go on a waiting list to take part. If you are 17 years or under and you do not return a signed parent/carer consent form, you will not be able to take part.

# Appendix J: Focus Group Questions and Prompts

**EP Focus group questions and prompts**

* Can you describe and share some of your experiences of the work you do which you might consider systemic, or relating to systems? Particularly SEND systems. And how you understand this in relation to the EP role?
* I am really interested in the idea that CYP can be active collaborators with professionals in making changes to SEND systems. What is your experience of CYP being involved in this type of work?
* Some suggest that as EPs we work at different levels – the individual child or family, the school, and wider organisations like the Local Authority. Do you think EPs can, or already do, work collaboratively with CYP at each of these levels, to make changes to SEND systems? Can you share your thoughts and experiences of doing this, or not doing it?
* I am interested in the idea of EPs working with groups, or communities, of CYP, as well as individual CYP. Do you have experience to share, or any thoughts, about engaging with groups, or communities, of CYP, as opposed to individual CYP? Perhaps particularly in relation to effecting systems change?
* How do you think working collaboratively with CYP to make changes to SEND systems relates to the EP role as a whole?
* I want you to imagine a time in the future where you are working in collaboration with young people to make meaningful changes to SEND systems. Can you describe what you see, feel, hear? What values are you drawing on in this work?
* Is there anything else you would like to discuss, relating to the themes of our discussion today?
* In the next focus group, you will be meeting with a group of young people who are active in making changes to SEND systems in this Local Authority.
* I wonder if you would like to spend some time today discussing, or planning, what you might like to tell the young people about your work? This might be based on what we have discussed today.
* What might you like to ask, or hear from the youth group?
* How would you like to communicate this? Just having a conversation is fine, but if you want to use any other forms of communication, like pictures, that would be fine too.

**Young people’s focus group questions and prompts**

* As a starter, just to get us going, can you tell us about a time when you have enjoyed doing something with other people.
* What is it like being involved in this group? What are the things that are important to you about being in this group? What are the best, and most frustrating things, about being involved in the group?
* Please describe your experiences of being involved in making changes to SEND systems?
* What experiences have you had of working with people outside this group, to make changes to SEND systems? What was this like? Did you feel it was a useful experience?
* Have your experiences of working with others ever included working with educational psychologists? Can you tell me more about this?
* Do you have ideas, or experiences about what educational psychologists do?
* How are educational psychologists involved in work with SEND systems? If you are not sure, can you imagine? Or do you want to talk in pairs for a moment, and then discuss it as a group?
* I want you to imagine a time in the future when you are working with educational psychologists to make changes to SEND systems. Can you describe what you imagine – what would it be like, what would be happening, what would you see, feel, hear?
* In the next focus group, you will meet with a group of 3 educational psychologists who all work in this area and are involved in work which makes changes to SEND systems. They have also met, like you are now, as a group, to talk about what they do and how that is linked to children and young people being involved in making changes to SEND systems. The next focus group will be a chance for the two groups to talk and hear about each other’s work. It will also be a chance to talk about the idea of educational psychologists and children and young people working together to make changes to SEND systems (although we will not be making any plans to do so as part of this research). I will be interested in hearing how you talk about your relationship to each other.
* I wonder if you would like to spend some time now discussing, or planning, what you might like to tell the educational psychologists about your experiences of being involved in making changes to SEND systems? What would you like them to know? This might be based on what we have discussed today.
* How would you like to communicate this? Bullet points? Graphic illustration?

**Joint focus group questions and prompts**

* Introduction
* Welcome – I’m really pleased we have an opportunity to meet together and learn about our two groups.
* Introductions – name, how long been in group/service, something you could share about yourself?
* Being clear about the purpose of this focus group:
  + I am interested in hearing everybody talk about the work that you do.
  + I want to learn about how your two groups relate to each other and what that means for the possibility of EPs and YP working together to create change to SEND systems.
  + I want to be clear that we are not going to make a plan to work together in the future.
* Is there anything you would like to add to the ground rules?
* This is an opportunity for discussion, and I am happy for you to talk amongst yourselves as well as with me. I will ask questions and make comments, but feel free to ask each other for more information or explore things more.
* Introducing structure
  + I’m hoping that this will be a conversation as much as possible
  + We prepared some ideas of what we might like to talk about in the separate focus groups, but I am happy for you to move away from this if you want to. But if there are things you know you really want to say or ask, I will make sure we have time for that – I’ll stop occasionally and ask if anybody would like to ask or say anything else.
  + Rough plan is:
    - Young people to tell EPs about what they do in their group
    - EPs to tell young people about what they do in their work
    - Chance for you all to ask questions of each other, based on what you have heard, or just your interest.
    - A chance for you all to talk about what it would be like for EPs and groups of young people to work together to make changes to SEND systems.
    - Anything you would like to ask before we get started?

**Telling/asking**

Young people tell EPs about their group

* I wonder if the young people would like to tell the educational psychologists a little bit about the work you do as a group, making changes to SEND systems?
* Consider prompts prepared in last group.

EPs tell the young people about their role and work

* I wonder if the EPs would like to tell the young people about the work they do to make changes to SEND systems?
* Consider prompts prepared in last group.

Groups can ask questions of each other

* I wonder if you have any thoughts or questions relating to what you have heard from the other group?
* Do you have any more questions you would like to ask each other?
* Consider prompts prepared in previous focus groups.

**Possibilities for collaboration**

Based on what we have discussed so far, I wonder what you think about the possibility of groups like yours working together?

What might the barriers be?

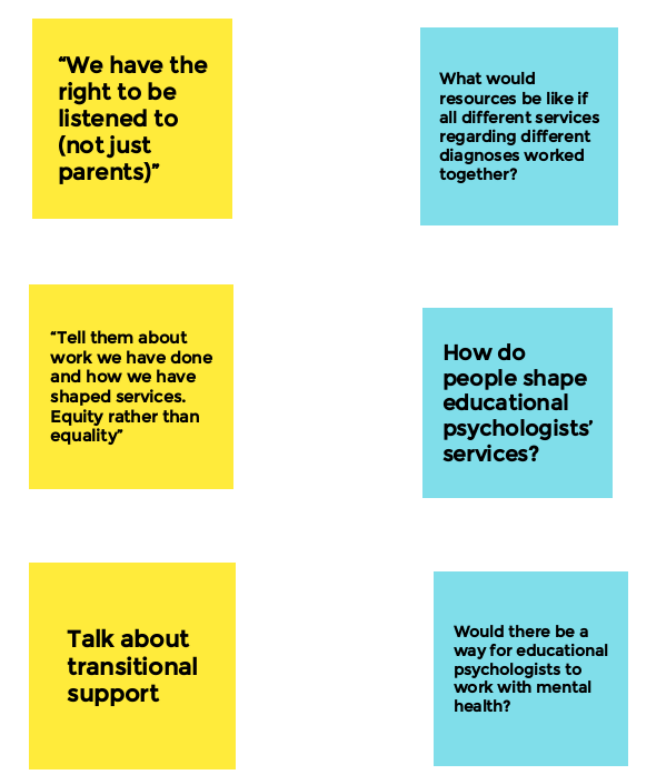
What might help the groups work together?

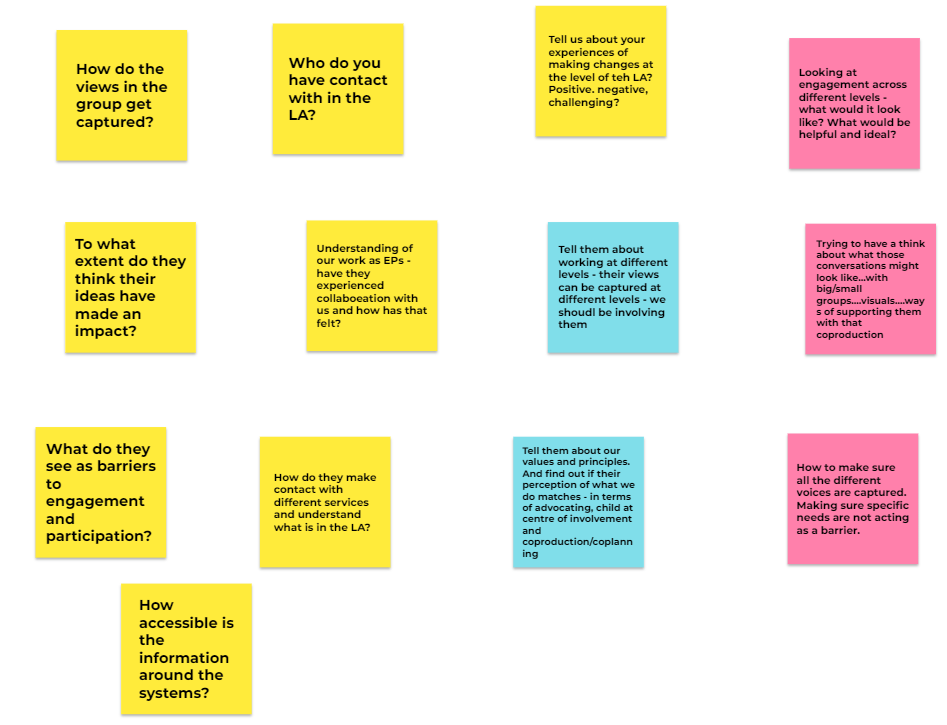
**Finishing off**

* Next steps
* I will transcribe (type out) the discussion and then analyse it – thinking about what we can learn from it.
* If you want to, you can meet with me to go through the analysis. You might have a different way of thinking about things, and we can talk about that – it will be interesting for me to hear.
* I will then write it all up into a report.
* We might want to tell people about what we have learnt, and you are welcome to join me in doing presentations to other people if you want.
* Be clear that this research project will not be taking any more steps to support the groups taking action together. But if they want to, they are free to do that.

# Appendix K: Jamboards from EP and YPs’ Focus Groups

Notes from YP’s focus group to share in joint focus group.



Notes from EP focus group to share in joint focus group

# Appendix L: Ground Rules for Focus Groups

**EP focus group**

Ground rules:

Participation in the focus group is voluntary.

It’s all right to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable.

All responses are valid—there are no right or wrong answers.

Please respect the opinions of others even if you don’t agree.

Try to stay on topic; we may need to interrupt so that we can cover all the material.

Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.

Help protect others’ privacy by not discussing details outside the group

Is there anything you would like to add to the above ground rules?

Anything you would like to ask before we get started?

**YP focus group**

Ground rules:

Participation in the focus group is voluntary.

It’s all right to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable.

All responses are valid—there are no right or wrong answers.

Please respect the opinions of others even if you don’t agree.

Try to stay on topic; we may need to interrupt so that we can cover all the material.

Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.

Help protect others’ privacy by not discussing details outside the group

Also for the recording, can you try not to use each other’s names, or the name of places that might identify anybody

Is there anything you would like to add to the above ground rules?

**Joint focus group**

Ground rules:

Participation in the focus group is voluntary.

It’s all right to abstain from discussing specific topics if you are not comfortable.

All responses are valid—there are no right or wrong answers.

Please respect the opinions of others even if you don’t agree.

Try to stay on topic; we may need to interrupt so that we can cover all the material.

Speak as openly as you feel comfortable.

Help protect others’ privacy by not discussing details outside the group

Is there anything you would like to add to the above ground rules?

# Appendix M: Summary of Parker’s (1992) Analytical Steps

**Summary of Parker’s (1992) 20 Steps, in Quotes:**

1. “consider all tissues of meaning as texts and to specify which texts will be studied” (p. 6)
2. “The second step in a discourse analysis, then, should be a process of exploring the connotations, allusions and implications which the texts evoke.” (p. 7)
3. “Asking what objects are referred to, and describing them (turtles, diseases, ghosts etc.)” (p.9)
4. "Talking about the talk as if it were an object, a discourse.” (p. 9)
5. “Specifying what types of person are talked about in this discourse, some of which may already have been identified as objects (turtles, doctors, mothers, benefactors, etc.)” (p. 10)
6. “Speculating about what they can say in the discourse, what you could say if you identified with them (what rights to speak in that way of speaking).” (p. 10)
7. “Mapping a picture of the world this discourse presents (running in accordance with God's plans, through the operation of discourses, at the mercy of hidden conspiracies, etc.)” (p. 12)
8. “Working out how a text using this discourse would deal with objections to the terminology (sinful doubt, crude out-of-date materialism, receipt of Moscow gold, etc.).” (p. 12)
9. “Setting contrasting ways of speaking, discourses, against each other and looking at the different objects they constitute (brains, souls, epiphenomena, etc.)” (p. 14)
10. “Identifying points where they overlap, where they constitute what look like the 'same' objects in different ways (secretions of neural matter, immortal spiritual essences, rhetorical devices, etc.).” (p. 14)
11. “Referring to other texts to elaborate the discourse as it occurs, perhaps implicitly, and addresses different audiences (in children's books, advertisements, jokes, etc.)” (p. 15)
12. “Reflecting on the term used to describe the discourse, a matter which involves moral/political choices on the part of the analyst (describing discourses about 'race' as 'racist' discourses, for example).” (p. 15)
13. “Looking at how and where the discourses emerged” (p. 16)
14. “Describing how they have changed, and told a story, usually about how they refer to things which were always there to be discovered.” (p. 16)

“We have arrived, through these criteria and steps, at a sense of discourse as something dynamic and changing, but we need to go a little further to make the analysis politically useful.” (p. 17)

1. “Identifying institutions which are reinforced when this or that discourse is used” (p. 18)
2. “Identifying institutions that are attacked or subverted when this or that discourse appears.” (p. 18)
3. “Looking at which categories of person gain and lose from the employment of the discourse” (p. 19)
4. “Looking at who would want to promote and who would want to dissolve the discourse.” (p. 19)
5. “Showing how a discourse connects with other discourses which sanction oppression” (p. 20)
6. “Showing how the discourses allow dominant groups to tell their narratives about the past in order to justify the present, and prevent those who use subjugated discourses from making history.” (p. 20)

# Appendix N: Research Diary Extracts

**26/10/2020**

I had a really useful discussion with my tutor today to talk about my thesis ideas. I have been swimming about in it for ages and I found today that things are clicking into place a little bit.

I have also found it useful to return to some reading about Popular Education. I have also realised that the question of whether I am getting stuck in the past is perhaps a bit distracting. It's useful and perhaps inevitable that we bring ideas and questions from our past experiences, so I think it is more useful that I accept that. Being conscious of staying open to new ideas is perhaps more important than being worried about being stuck in the past. So, for instance I really want to make sure when I think about/talk about/investigate EPs current practice that I do that with curiosity, rather than only looking at things through the lens of my past work. I have a lot to learn from others - in fact that is why I am here - I want to learn new ways of thinking and looking at things, but without abandoning old ways. And this research experience is an opportunity to learn from others and from myself to think about new ways forward for Educational Psychology.

**4/10/2021**

I had a meeting with EP service managers today as a kind of scoping meeting to talk about my research in advance of approaching EPs in a team meeting. I was a bit nervous about what they might say or if they might not like the idea, or they might block it, or they might ask me questions I wouldn’t be able to answer. Or they might think it was a bit pie in the sky. But actually, they really understood what I was talking about, they're really interested in it and excited about it. And they say it fits really well with local authority and priorities. So I am really motivated now to get the pilot work completed so I can move onto the next stage of the project.

**25/10/21**

I feel like I am juggling lots of bits of the research at the moment. I’m trying to keep on top of the organisation and planning of the project. In lots of ways that is going better than I expected, as it looks like I will be able to run the project in the area I had hoped. I am managing to recruit EPs and the contact for a youth group has shown a lot of interest and enthusiasm for the project.

As the work is participatory I have planned to discuss the focus group prompts/questions with the participants, if they are interested in doing so. But I don’t want to be completely unprepared, so I feel like I need to bring some ideas to that session, should it happen. If participants don’t express an interest, and I am left creating the prompts myself, then I need to create some ideas! I am finding it difficult to find a balance between remaining open to ideas from participants (so not shaping the project too much in advance) and being prepared and ready for each part of the project, to keep it moving.

This difficulty is also apparent in my choice and interest in the form of analysis to use to interpret the data from the focus groups. I am interested in using discourse analysis as I feel it fits really well with my understanding of what I am trying to explore in the project, but I wonder if I am presenting the project quite differently to potential participants, in order to explain it in a way that might make sense to them. I am worried that in trying to explain it in an accessible way I have lost its meaning and when I come to explain my choice of analysis, it might not make sense why I want to use it.

I also feel I need some clarity for myself about how much of the project is action research. I want to be clear about what I am setting up with the participants in terms of the possibility of working together in the future (and be clear that this project is limited in that respect) but I am also interested in maintaining that focus on the real application of the research in terms of EP practice. I’m finding it difficult to keep my own head clear about the line between those two things.

**29/10/21**

I had a meeting with one of the EP participants today to discuss the project - an opportunity for her to ask any questions and for me to tell her a bit more about it. I was a bit nervous in advance of the meeting as I felt I wasn’t entirely prepared but on reflection I think I was really. I think with the participatory nature of the research there is a balance to be struck between preparation and being open and flexible enough to take on the ideas of participants. It feels like it’s about being flexible without being chaotic!

We had a really fascinating conversation about coproduction and about the disability rights movement and how this impacts on our practice as EPs, but also how distanced we feel from that at times. We also talked a lot about the balance of individual work we do as opposed to work with collectives of young people. I felt really delighted that we seemed to have a lot of common ground in terms of perspectives on EP practice. But the conversation about disability rights also prompted me to think that perhaps I should have done more reading/literature searching about disability rights and educational psychology. It was a moment where what I have read about the research process was put into practice - I have read and been told that research takes twists and turns as you proceed. And I felt like that happened here - I suddenly felt like I could be looking at the research from a different perspective. Not that I haven't been thinking about disability rights (I have been inspired by Ian Parker's writing about the hearing voices movement and how psychology/psychologists can engage with that) but perhaps not in those exact terms. I will go and explore that.

It was also interesting to reflect on the participative aspect of the conversation. I had a sense that I maybe shouldn't be influencing her thinking too much by going into too much detail about my thinking or opinions about EP practice. But it felt important to be open and transparent about my ideas and what sits behind the project. It's not me observing and not influencing. I am in the research and will influence it. Is it about being conscious of how I am influencing it?

**5/11/21**

I had another meeting with a potential EP participant on Monday. It was the same brief as the meeting I had with the first EP last week, but it was a very different conversation.

One of the issues we discussed was what we mean by systemic practice. The EP was asking if I was talking about our work drawing on pupil voice in casework and how this is a form of systemic practice? I tried to explain that I was taking a broader view and was interested in how our systemic practice can include work which influences SEND systems, outside of casework. I also emphasised that part of the project was about exploring our understanding of what systemic practice means, and that I was open to different people’s interpretations of that, as I think people use the expression in lots of different ways. It felt as if this part of the conversation didn’t go very far. Certainly, it felt like a familiar theme for me, talking to EPs about the idea that our influence on SEND systems doesn’t always start from casework, and that young people’s voice on systems issues doesn’t always have to relate to their own educational journeys. I suppose that this is what this project is about - exploring these issues with EPs - but I wonder if those EPs who have different views on this subject to me, might not get involved, which will have an influence on the results. I partly wonder if an interesting separate research project might be just to explore with EPs what they mean when they talk about systemic practice.

The final thing we talked about, which I hadn’t expected as much, was the qualitative nature of the research. We talked around the issues of delivering small scale qualitative research, which was not trying to generate generalisable findings, and so was just working with one group. I am conscious of the different perspectives people might have on this subject and it raised for me the issue that the participants are self-selecting in lots of ways, and this will influence the results. But this must be common in qualitative research.

**12/11/21**

I’m feeling a bit despondent about the research. I’m not hearing anything back from the pilot work or the youth group. I’ve got some ideas about trying something new with the pilot work. So I need to get on with that. But just feeling a bit overwhelmed generally.

**13/12/21**

I had another meeting with a potential EP participant this week. It was interesting to me that the question was again about what we mean by systemic, in terms of EP practice. I suppose for me I am hoping that the research will help define what mean by systemic practice in the context in which we are talking about it, but I have a sense from participants that they want this defined in advance. My perspective is that my project is taking a social constructionist stance so drawing more on the idea that we are creating meanings rather than there being an answer out there to uncover. I think my understanding is that action research is more social constructionist but I feel like participants are asking me to define some of the working concepts to start with. I wonder where this drive for me to define concepts is coming from at this early stage?

I have also now recruited one YP. I need more youth participants so I have decided to go back to the group with a more accessible format of information and consent form to see if that helps. I am meeting the youth participant on Friday – I will be interested to see how that goes in contrast to the EP meetings.

**7/1/22**

I had a conversation with a course tutor today about my research and one of the things we talked about was action research. It helped me think about it in new ways, particularly the idea that in order for research to fit the definition of action research participants need to be signing up to action planning and the cyclical process….I need to put some thought into whether this is the case with my research.

**10/1/22**

I emailed my contact at the youth group today to say I haven't had any more responses to the recruitment so I am assuming there is no interest. Feel sad doing so but I've given it lots of time and tried really hard with the recruitment and I need to respect the fact that they might just not be interested. Need to think about my next steps...plan is to approach another group but need to think about why recruitment didn't work with this group and try and reduce any barriers next time round.

I have been doing a lot of thinking and writing about systemic practice. For instance, a lot of systemic practice draws on social constructionism, where we are taking the stance that realities are constructed through our dialogues with one another? In which case, the involvement, or not, of CYP is important. If we are taking a social constructionist approach to systemic practice, we are saying that we create meanings of situations through our interactions with others and if at some levels of our work (not casework) that does not include CYP how are those meanings useful or relevant? These are systems and organisations that are run for the purpose of educating children - they are for children, so if our understanding of those systems is constructed through our work, do we not need to interact with CYP for that to be relevant?

I have been wondering what to do if my recruitment of YP is not successful, but in the context of my thinking about systemic practice it feels really important to have YP involved in this project.

**21/1/22**

Turned a corner this week and after lots of communication with my professional contact for the YP I now have 3, or maybe 4 YP volunteering to take part. The process of recruitment of young people through a professional contact has really highlighted the issue of gatekeeping for me as a researcher, but also perhaps for EPs generally.

I feel a protectiveness from other professionals over the YP I am seeking to recruit and note that I am interpreting that in terms of my assumptions of how people see me as a TEP (and as a member of the EP profession). I am feeling a strange feeling around my status, experience, or maybe judgements around my ability to work with young people with special educational needs, which is interesting in the context of this research. I wonder if people may question EPs as being able to work directly with, or collaborate with young people in a way that demonstrates an understanding of their needs. I am feeling like a dry, out-of-touch professional, who doesn’t have the skills to do this work effectively. Maybe we are seen as operating in a different way, and I am picking up on that? Which is what I want to explore really.

**22/2/22**

Just finished the focus group with the EPs and thought it useful to get some of my thoughts down immediately afterwards.

It felt like it went well in that we managed to stick to the structure that I brought and everybody had plenty to say and seemed engaged. There were ideas and examples used that were new to me as well so it was really interesting from my perspective, even just as a general discussion, as well as part of the research.

There were some moments where I felt like the questions I was asking came across as a bit of a challenge to their practice. This is reminiscent of conversations I have had with EPs across the research journey when talking about my ideas and questions about EP practice with CYP. There was a moment though when one of the participants said that their heart sank when they read the focus group prompts, as the question related to an area of practice that they thought they (or the service, or EPs generally maybe) didn’t do enough of. I wasn’t sure what I thought about that as a starting point for the participants…a sinking heart…and I am left with a slight concern that I have come across as critical or challenging of practice.

It was an interesting reflection from one of the EPs as well that they were surprised to hear that there was an active SEND youth group in the LA – again it perhaps is an interesting finding that EPs perhaps are not very plugged into that side of things in their work.

I did find it quite hard in the moment to stay focused on what they were saying. And I probably didn't use my usual facilitation skills. I was conscious of thoughts of not wanting to influence the research too much which was interesting and perhaps reflects earlier influences in my undergraduate psychology training.

**24/2/22**

The youth focus group is now happening in person, which I am actually really pleased about. There have been some logistical issues though with agreeing the date for the project. There has been an extra layer of organisation in that one of the YP has asked if we could hold the focus group in person. Given the changes with Covid restrictions I thought this might be possible and managed to gain approval from ethics to do this – doing that has caused some delays though. It has been interesting trying to organise all of this with the YP, with a professional in the group as part of that organisational process. Although all of the YP are over 18 and I could in theory contact them directly, it feels important to keep associated professionals in the loop as well. Doing this is at times complicates the communications and is slowing down the process. I wonder if our interactions reflect what the experience of EPs might be if they were trying to work collaboratively with up in their everyday practice? If we were working with YP as part of community groups, we want to emphasise that sense of them being part of a community and perhaps that always involves some element of working through an adult mediator or gatekeeper?

It feel like this piece of work spans so many different issues and it is hard to do each one justice…it is about coproduction, participation, community, knowledge, systems, social constructionism, relational theory, power.

Covid is also emerging as a theme that I have so far not addressed directly. It has come up in the EP focus group - both in terms of how it impacted on the running of the group, as well as in what people said.  And looking back, it has been the subtheme to all of the planning of the work. I have kind of ignored it but maybe I need to bring it to the foreground. How does it impact on our interactions/relationships with YP? Will it continue to have an effect? What does the future look like considering the impact of Covid?

**25/2/22**

I have just finished the YPs’ focus group and want to note down my thoughts and feelings. I feel almost elated at the end of that. Is it the experience of working closely with YP? It was so interesting, and I really enjoy working with groups of young people…always have. Or is it just the relief of having achieved it?! There were so many thoughts and feelings it is difficult to know where to start but the following is just a snapshot of some of them.

Felt hard to keep it on the subject of making changes to systems…that’s how it felt in the session. Lots of reference to personal stories – individual experiences – which I felt confused by. Wasn’t sure if I should attempt to make links between those experiences and the subject of being in a group, or how those experiences informed their group experiences.

Kept thinking about time and how we had barely mentioned educational psychologists through a lot of it. I felt a pressure to bring that in – it wasn’t happening naturally and I felt responsible for that somehow.

The conversation about EPs was fascinating. I was thinking throughout about how much they were drawing on a medical model of the role. I wondered if I should tell them about the range of things an EP does, but then I was also thinking about how I was interested to hear about their perceptions without my influence. I felt like I wanted to keep them right. I think I felt protective of my colleagues. Not protective of myself strangely. Even afterwards I wondered if I should send them some information about the EP role – as if it has been remiss of me not to already. They also seemed to have some really different ideas about the role to how I see it – lots of talk about diagnosis, a frustration about lack of holistic working, EPs being professionals who specialise in specific conditions. I was struck by them talking about psychiatrists in the same category as EPs.

I sometimes felt like I couldn’t keep on track with the content of what they were saying – listening to the content and the nuances. I think I used to be better at that – wonder if I am really out of practice, which is disappointing. I felt in the session as if my skills were not up to scratch – not completely tuned in.

I felt a real gulf between the two groups. We are inhabiting very similar worlds but seem so far apart.

There was something that crossed my mind at one point, about how both groups seem marginalised in some ways from the development of services. Interesting about the perceptions of power – YP saw EPs as more powerful than they are, or having power in places where they don’t. There seems a shared experience of having to explain to other power holders about why their views/experiences were important.

Also feel like this could just be the beginning of something. My project will be limited to these focus groups, but I thought as soon as I walked out the door, that there could well be some movement to take this to another level – to some actual action research. Would be a fascinating project for somebody. It’s like this is the groundwork. I think actually that’s the energising bit of it….breathing some life into a way of working that could really make a difference.

**5/4/22**

Some thoughts following the joint focus group.

A real prominent feeling at the end of that is that I should have done more to facilitate the discussion…I wonder why I feel like that, given that I decided that the structure should be determined by what the participants were bringing to it?

I am interested in how I felt about my position in the group, which I hadn’t really reflected much on before. I suppose I felt like I was part of the EP group in some ways, but at the same time I felt protective of the YP and I wanted to help draw out their stories. I felt like I wanted to help each group understand what the other one does and maybe particularly help the YP understand what EPs do…but maybe there was a sense of frustration on my part as well that the EPs were not always saying what I expected them to say (particularly about systems work). I noticed that there was a lot of talk about individual work and individual experiences of diagnosis and treatment.

There was a lot of reflexivity for me in this focus group – I was very conscious of my internal dialogue and questions in the moment of how to use that dialogue. One of the ongoing thoughts I was having was about wanting the EPs to say certain things in response to the YP and then considering if perhaps it was my role to say those things if I was thinking them! Concurrently to me having these thoughts though, the discussion was happening around me and I noticed that it moved in different directions to those I thought it could (or should?!).

I was interested in the different levels of energy I experienced on the part of the participants compared to the previous focus groups. Perhaps particularly with the EPs, in the first focus group they seemed very enthusiastic about the questions they wanted to ask the YP and then in this group they seemed much more cautious. I wonder if there is a possibility that we were all just a bit tired? There was something about the group happening beyond the end of what EPs tend to call their working day. The YP had been keen for the focus group to happen at their usual time and venue, which was after 5pm. I certainly felt tired at that time of day and I wonder if others did too – again there was something about the practice in action with this group. If EPs were to work with community groups more often I think there would be some practical changes to how we work that would impact on our practice – just keeping energy levels up if nothing else!!

I am left with a feeling that there is so much groundwork to do in terms of bringing the groups together and that we never would have had time to do any more in terms of action…although I have been interested in action research all along, it would never have been easy to build in any more action than we managed.

**27/6/22**

Preparing to present some of my research to other DEdCPsy students at university. Many of my peers are further forward with their research but I am still keen to talk about my journey to date and to hear some feedback on what I have done to date. I have just started my analysis and it feels useful to be able to discuss some of the early results from that with peers and tutors. It is that sense of being on a journey with my research that I am focussed on and having the opportunity to reflect on that is useful as it helps me consider what might stretch beyond the submission of my thesis. It is useful to think about the research as a snapshot in time, with connections to the past and to the future. It can have an impact beyond the words on the page and I am pleased to be in a position where I can begin thinking about that impact and my future journey.

**6/3/23**

I have had a really big gap in my work on my thesis due to the pressures of work and I have created space to get going on it again by going part-time. Although I am frustrated by the gap it is also useful at one level to be able to look at the work again with some distance. One of the things that has become clearer to me with time is that although it is important to me to reference my starting point with this – the theoretical influences and experiences in my previous practice in informal education – I also need to recognise that I am no longer working in that field. It has been useful to bring that in order to offer a fresh perspective on educational psychology practice but by holding onto it too tightly I think I have been struggling to engage fully with the relevant literature in educational psychology, such as writing on systemic ideas.

**10/3/23**

I am re-engaging with the literature again as I begin to pull the analysis together. The latter parts of the analysis are really about trying to interpret the findings in the context in which EPs practice. I have felt frustrated and overwhelmed at times by the quantity of literature which I have not engaged with up until now, for example some recent literature I have read about participation in the context of formal education. On reflection though I think perhaps what I am experiencing is something quite relevant to this research. I think the context in which EPs work does not always reflect that wide and rich theoretical base. I am thinking specifically about the SEND Code of Practice and how it does offer some interesting ideas about coproduction but I am beginning to question how much it reflects some of the richness of the debates about participation, and particularly for EPs (the references to EPs in the Code of Practice are not directly in relation to coproduction for instance).

# Appendix O: EP Focus Group Transcript

**Educational Psychologists’ Focus Group Transcript**

JK: Facilitator (me)

EP1: Educational psychologist 1

EP2: Educational psychologist 2

EP3: Educational psychologist 3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| { | Overlap in conversational turns indicated by left hand bracket |
| [?text] | Unclear speech (where transcription may be inaccurate) |
| [?] | Small segment of inaudible text |
| [????] | Longer segment of inaudible text |
| [laugh] | Information on non-linguistic features, like laughing |
| ... | Long pause (longer than 4 seconds) |
| [*italicised text*] | Text which has been changed to ensure anonymity |
| (INTERRUPTION) | Interruption (where transcript stopped/started) |
| (…SECTION REMOVED…) | Small section of text removed to protect confidentiality of participant |

(TRANSCRIPTION STARTED AT THIS POINT AFTER ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY WHICH INCLUDED PERSONAL INFORMATION)

JK: Wow, yeah, that sounds great. Thank you. Thank you for everybody because you've shared a little bit of personal stuff there as well. And it's a really nice insight, actually, into little bits of your lives. Em, so to kind of get a bit more into, into the topic, I suppose I was wondering if you could, em, describe and share some of your experiences of the work that you do which you might consider systemic or relating to systems? It's a very kind of broad question, but just, I wonder what kind of springs to mind in terms of the work that you do that you think relates to systems or that you might consider systemic?

EP1: Mm.

EP2: I guess one, one way that you could look at systems is not perhaps on the broadest level, but you could look at systems within a school and so almost working at that whole school level, you know, through training and planning meetings and just sort of identifying sort of areas of need within a school,

JK: {Mm

EP2: Em, and within that school system, em, I think can be classed as systemic.

JK: {Yep

EP2: On a smaller scale but yeah, very much still sort of working at that systems level.

JK: {Okay

EP2: So, yeah, if that makes sense?

JK: Yeah, yeah, that's interesting. So, you say, on a smaller scale did you have a, have an idea of a bigger scale as well, or?

EP2: Em, I guess, I mean, you could work almost across trusts, you know, if if say, em, that might be a broader system. Um, yeah, if schools are in the same trust.

JK: {Okay

EP2: That might be something as well and working more across those schools.

JK: Yeah, OK, thank you. That's interesting.

EP1: Em, I suppose for me, some of the systems work over the last year or so has been at a level where it's been around where we are placed as psychologists in a wider organisation. Em, and a lot of the focus has been around getting us to the tables that we need to be at

JK: {Hmm

EP1: where we are not necessarily be invited in by the system em, where we are actually, you know, we're a really, we think, a crucial cog in that wheel, em, where the wider system, em, sometimes sort of rolls on without us it seems, em, and actually, that can feel quite like a replication of what can happen in in schools or systems [laughing].

JK: Okay. Do you want to tell us a bit more about maybe give us an example of the kinds of things you mean, em?

EP1: Yeah, em, so there are lots of strategic steering groups across the local authority that relate directly to SEND systems, em, so, for example, there's a working eh, there’s a PfA post-16 working group in the local authority.

JK: Okay

EP1: And we're not, we're not there, em, so it's in some ways, it's about knowing having that knowledge of the system to be able to infiltrate and influence it, em, so we, eh uh but it's also about our capacity, I think, in terms of remaining operational, but then being able to em carve out the space to then, move, to to move into the the bigger operating system.

JK: Okay, yeah.

EP1: So an example might be em so the early intervention panel work that we very integral well, we were we were facilitating all of that process, em and and we had we had a seat at the table with em secondary heads that then made it so the [*LA group name*] kind of formulated a new system there, and they rolled ahead with ideas and a new and a wave of change that we weren’t that we had to then, em, fight to kind of get back in on and then to shape in the way that and influence it in the way that we that put children and young people first and based on our principles and our values. So it's those sorts of things, I think,

JK: Yeah, and you said that that can relate that kind of I'm not quite sure the words you used but you said something about that kind of mirroring our work in schools or relates

EP1: I did, yeah so in terms of that replication of, em, where we fit where we are, which cog we are and then that wider influence and bringing our values and the way we work into those systems and having that influence, em I think sometimes we're not invited to the table in schools are we?

JK: Okay

EP1: Or we're invited to a table that we don't want to be at, em, yeah.

JK: Yeah okay. Thanks, ‘EP1’. I should should emphasise as well that I'm really happy for you all to kind of interact and and, you know, have a discussion between yourselves as well. Don't don't wait for me to, em kind of ask you questions because I'm just conscious of we're doing this online and if we were sat in a room together, we'd probably, it would probably feel a bit more, em, discussion based, but so feel free to kind of chip in and respond to each other if you if you want to. Is there anything else anybody would like to say that on that about kind of your experiences of working with systems or systemic work?

EP3: I think, em uh, since we've been going back into schools, had a bit more of that training level work that EP2's talking about and that's been quite nice to be at that level and actually to to do it sometimes with the whole school so you know that everyone kind of leaving with the same message,

JK: Mmm.

EP3: Maybe? Hopefully [laughing] keep giving the same one over and over again. Um and then I suppose a lot of the systems work at the moment, has kind of come out of individual casework almost, and that you're trying to understand the systems that are around that child while you are at

JK: mm

EP3: the table with the school and, um, and to understand the context that the school and their systems are in to see what you can kind of move or shift with them to

JK: {Mmm

EP3: support the young person. Which can happen

EP1: Do? I don't know whether, in terms of, you know, so I was thinking about doing multi element planning with, like a staff team. And very often what happens in in those situations is it's often less about the resources in the school. It's often about the dynamic and the relational aspects of that happening around the child and developing a shared understanding em, and actually modelling a way of communicating with each other, em where there are kind of quite disparate views about what a child's needs are. So, I'm not, I did it a lot more in my previous role, but I found that really helpful to sort of get a where you can get good participation, a whole kind of secondary team and all your subject leaders around a kid and and work on that that system of adults around them.

JK: {Mmm

EP1: I guess it's a bit of circle of adults approach, em but it's more about understanding need and understanding each other's understanding of need.

JK: {Mmm

EP1: and I’ve found sorry,

JK: No go no sorry.

EP1: I think that's I've found that useful in just making a change for a young person because it's just in probably just increased communication and understanding between the within the system. It's increased that capacity for collaboration between em

EP3: It's amazing how many different views of a child can be shared in one setting actually when you are doing something like that isn’t it

JK: Mmm

EP1: Yeah,

EP3: coming together if that creates something quite different,

EP1: Yeah,

EP2: And I guess it develops that empathy towards the child as well sort of within the system em, yeah, I think as well, just from sort of hearing about the child's context and sharing views on the child, and I think can, yeah, be really positive in building that understanding of need, but also the empathy that then goes alongside it.

JK: Mmm

EP1: I think it can make people think and reflect upon the system itself in terms of where the glitches are, where the lack of communication is where the policy and procedure and process so, might not work for any child, so where you sort of meeting in those groups around children's needs it tends to be that with that bit of self, that bit of reflection about what works and what doesn't I think it can cut it can start conversations around, em, an SLT, or about making changes or different approaches, em, in terms of behaviour policy or the way that, yeah, it's just sort of highlighting the the what's not working in a system, I think.

JK: {Mmm

EP1: and there's a bit more reflection about how are we operating together and what are we doing in terms of our job of educating children and meeting need.

JK: Yeah, okay

EP2: And this might be a slight offshoot, so, Judy, bring, feel free to bring us back but, em, I often also often think that as EPs we're almost creating this temporary system between almost like school and home

JK: Mm.

EP2: And you know, when we have those meetings together, em, and bringing all parties in sort of different contexts, it's almost like, em, a new system is being formed almost within that

JK: {Mmm

EP2: and hearing those different views and where to go next from that, em, yeah, yes, because you're bringing both parties and any other parties you know, who were involved together, em, and they're bringing their systems or like this new system around the child.

JK: That's interesting, so you're kind of relating that back to the thinking about our our role within that as well so we're kind of describing our role to kind of create almost create a new system.

EP2: Yeah,

JK: {Between the, between the

EP2: yeah, yeah, and it's I guess it's yeah, a little bit abstract, but yeah, it's certainly something that we discussed sort of a lot in our training as well, em about sort of creating that that new system, em yeah, with the child at the centre.

JK: That's interesting. Thank you.

EP1: I think that that notion of a temporary system or a lasting system is interesting as well. I suppose we're trying to keep wiring those circuits, aren't we so that they become hardwired, but they exist temporarily.

EP2: Yeah, yeah

JK: {Okay

EP2: and then those systems continue when we're not involved almost that communication and yeah,

JK: Mmm

EP2: we don't want them dependent on our, us, facilitating that almost, yeah.

JK: Okay thank you that's really interesting there’s lots of different perspectives there [laugh]. Em, I'm really I'm also really interested in the idea that, eh, children and young people can be quite active collaborators with professionals in making changes to systems, particularly special educational needs systems I suppose in our in our context, I wonder what your experiences of children and young people being involved in that type of work, so being involved in work where they're active collaborators with professionals to make changes to systems? …

EP1: I mean in I I don't think in my experience as an EP I've seen enough of that happening, I think em in terms of that, I think in terms of proactive work and looking at resources within a school and the way that behaviour policies work, erm and the way that, em I think at a group level it's it's children feed in around their own planning but in terms of the bigger I I think there's a lot more opportunities and I think we're missing opportunities in terms of supporting that work within

JK: {Okay

EP1: the community to be working. (BACKGROUND NOISE) Sorry my children are screaming

JK: Don't worry [laughing]. You got something em have you got anything particular in mind there where you're saying you feel like we're kind of missing opportunities, is there something in particular that you're thinking there? You might not, but

EP1: yeah, I suppose I was. (BACKGROUND NOISE) Sorry can you hear that?

JK: A little bit yeah, it's okay don't worry.

EP1: I'll get it in a minute, em so I was thinking about train doing training around restorative practice.

JK: Okay.

EP1: and, em, there was there was scope within that work that didn't happen around, em, working collaboratively with children and young people as part of the school community to embed that practice and to feed back on that practice and to talk about what it should look like, so there was the training delivered to staff, but actually, it I really felt for for embedding that restorative practice it needed the children and young people as a community to also influence how that might roll out.

JK: Okay,

EP1: Well, I'm just I'll be back in one second.

JK: Mhm. Yeah. Okay.

EP3: It's quite interesting because it makes me think about em when you're doing, like, a circle of friends what ‘EP1’ was just saying I suppose [laughing] that you would be really engaging that group of, I suppose in that case, it's a group of children around an individual

JK: yeah

EP3: child, isn't it em, but they would almost be involved in in helping with next steps and

JK: yeah, yeah,

EP3: but yeah it's an interesting, em, but I do, yeah, I agree with ‘EP1’ that there's not probably enough of it.

JK: Okay,

EP2: Yeah

(INTERRUPTION)

JK: Em, ‘EP1’ ‘EP3’ was just reflecting what you've been saying a little bit I don't know if you want to repeat that again, ‘EP3’

EP3: yeah some of it just it reminded me of doing circles of em, I could say the wrong thing is it circle of friends?

JK: {Yeah

EP3: Actually and then involving, involving the other children around the child from their from their class and em, yeah, I suppose what you're saying in terms of having them on board with things like restorative practice and helping to embed that made me think of that around.

EP2: Yeah.

JK: Mm.

EP1: Em done some work with a group of students around, em, sanctions, consequences that for their their take on what the school behaviour policies should look like

JK: Okay,

EP1: em

EP3: That's interesting.

EP1: That was really interesting, it was interesting how these were the usual suspects in terms of the kids who, you know, were kind of racking up the behaviour sanctions left, right, and centre.

JK: Okay

EP1: They were going to make the transition into Key Stage Three, and their head teacher was really concerned about eh because it wasn't, it was a infant and junior so they were working collaboratively with the head teacher at the next school because there were big differences in that system and the primary school system and the head was very much aware that these children were very, very quickly going to be, em, impacted negatively by the the system in the, after transition. So the work with the kids was around, well,

(INTERRUPTION – INTERNET CONNECTIVITY)

JK: … Em, it's interesting because you're kind of talking. You're kind of talking about something that I was going to pick up on later, em

EP1: Well, I'll hold that if you like,

JK: Yeah, no? Well, you can, you you seem fine now, actually so

EP1: Okay, yeah, it was about them shaping what was happening now in their current setting and then thinking about what would what would work where they were going and how what's happening there fits with what's happening here

JK: {Mmm

EP1: what would that look like if it was better? Em, and they were really interested, they had so much to say, they were really, really hard on themselves, some of their sanctions were [laughing] um so that sort of stuff, you know, and I think schools, we might not necessarily be part of that but I think most schools as good practice do involve children

JK: {Okay.

EP1: in their, em capture the voice of children in terms of their policies, especially, well, I'm I’m talking about primary level, I'm not sure

JK: Mm.

EP2: I was involved in eh, a piece of work this was a few years ago so not not at [*town name*] em, in a secondary school where they really wanted the, the voice of the the young people in terms of coming through to what a provision would look like

JK: {okay

EP2: and within, within their setting em and sort of getting from them what they would value about it and what's important for them and what almost this sort of space needs to be like, em, and and that worked well and I guess that's linking to the systems within the school, em, and how they can be supported. But that was a really good piece of work em, and yeah, so, em, getting that secondary voice really

JK: Mmm

EP2: so that they can, yeah, have a say in, in their support and what that looks like.

EP1: Mm

JK: Yeah, that's interesting are there? I'm kind of looking at my notes because I'm kind of thinking one of the things I was going to ask you about which you're kind of, em, we're kind of talking about in some ways already is this idea of working with em groups, or, communities of young people em, perhaps in contrast to working with individual young people, which we, we do do as well and I'm just wanting to hear more about your experiences of that and it feels like that that's perhaps what you're kind of talking about a fair bit already in terms of this type of work that you're talking about work with groups of children rather than individual children? Have I kind of picked that up, right?

EP1: Hmm

EP2: Yeah

EP1: Mmhmm

JK: Yeah. Okay. Anybody else have anything to share around that, em, and it might not might not necessarily be work that you've delivered yourself, but like you say, em, work that you've been, you kind of witnessed in in other places or seeing other people doing as part of your work, if you know what I mean? Not necessarily that you've done.

EP3: Emm it's making me feel like I should be asking more schools to be about things like their school council and who's on it from young people and how that's [laugh] there's other things, I suppose, within their systems and groups and organisations and structures like that, that most schools would have

EP1: Yeah,

EP3: that I, I never hear about, sometimes we hear about someone being very proud about being on a school council

JK: Hmm from a child themselves?

EP3: Yeah.

JK: Yeah, yeah. What is it about the discussion that makes you feel that that's something that you feel that you would like to explore more in your practice?

EP3: I think partly because it does seem like a space that we've created where children could make

JK: mmm

EP3: change in school. And I suppose it's it's knowing how, for me and I'm sure it varies a lot in different settings, how meaningful that participation is and how much those voices are then, em,

EP1: yeah

EP3: listened to, because I think there is often a danger of those things, em, happening everywhere and becoming quite tokenistic because it's just something that you've got to to have in place and it's something everyone does, but not necessarily having the ethos behind it that would make it, eh, as meaningful.

EP1: Mm.

JK: Mm Okay,

EP3: So it could be,

EP1: Yeah, I wonder if there's something around, because when I read the prompts, Judy,

JK: {Mmm

EP3: for the discussion, I just got this sort of sinking feeling that this is a blind spot for us, we are so and I've, and I've known group work as an approach happen in various services, but it's very rarely it seems very rarely sort of an intervention that we get involved in. It's much more of a coaching model in terms of interventions or and that kind of direct work with young people, I'm not, I'm just I it just made me think about how well placed we are to do that work in terms of our understanding of change and our ability to facilitate and support and enable participation. Em, and I know why we don't do it. We don't do it because of service level agreements and a, and a focus on individual case work and, and statutory constraints

JK: Hmm. Do you want to tell us a bit more about your thoughts on that actually, that's, it would be interesting to hear more about that

EP1: In terms of constraints, or?

JK: Yeah, what you're saying is, like you said, em, I know why that is. And you went on to talk about the kind of

EP1: well, I, I suppose it would, where that work might fit might not be seen as the priority for the school there's so much we could do in terms of community in terms of working with communities of young people around academic resilience in the systems around that in terms of restorative practice, em, just in terms of, eh, you know, kind of looking at relational practices in the school and how safe they feel at school, how well supported, em, but it's, it's always time and that project work and finding that space to do that systemic work, if school haven't necessarily identified that for themselves as a training need or part of their school development plan,

EP3: Mmm

EP1: its, it feels as though it's a, a luxury.

EP3: I wonder whether so, whether sometimes stuff like that's happening through other sources as well, and that we're not kind of associated with it, if that makes sense so like em I know a lot of governors go in and do a kind of voice work,

EP1: {work

JK: Okay

EP3: with children and when I've been in school sort of watching it, I've thought, I can't believe I'm not doing any of this [laughing]

EP1: Yeah, yeah,

EP3: which sounds

EP1: that's what it feels like, it's like that bus goes past you and you should be on it, that's my feeling all the time.

JK: Right, okay

EP3: Em

JK: Yeah, that's interesting.

EP2: I feel like just going on what ‘EP1’ was saying, schools are sometimes quite, em, in terms of their priorities, often quite reactive, you know it's it's, em, like quite an immediate problem, and, and concern em,

JK: Okay

EP2: and yeah, and maybe that is a little bit about their perception towards what EPs can do. Maybe maybe we're still trying to expand that you know of our scope, really? Em, but yeah, sometimes I feel like, yeah, it's not high on their priorities.

JK: Mmm

EP3: It's hard, isn't it? Because I think sometimes when you're trying to push yourself out of that box and you kind of realise that actually, there is another statutory coming around the corner [laughing],

EP2: yeah

EP3: then you find yourself sort of backtracking on something that you might have just created because you you have to do the other thing. That one isn't as, em, negotiable.

EP2: Mmmhhh

JK: Mmm

EP1: There's got to be a commitment to the work and a kind of, em the commitment's got to be about about time and about values and really valuing it, because it often where I know where I've had things planned and then schools will just bump it off and not see it as a priority and where there's something more pressing or there's, em, a very challenging situation with a pupil and they'll want that that sort of, it is the reactive work rather than the proactive work that we're often drawn into and

EP2: Mm

EP1: it would be, it would be, we, we, I suppose as well what I was just thinking about was because we're outside of the system, kids are much more, you know, we go, we do the advocacy, and we do in the individual case work and my personal experience is that kids generally young people, sorry, children and young people really want to talk about their experience in schools, they want to tell you what's not working. They've got, they absolutely know what would what change for the better would look like and they're very willing to communicate that to a person who's, outside the system,

JK: okay

EP1: just it. So we do it on a case by case, don't we? But we've, we're really missing the trick, I think, because we are outside, we are external and we are trained to

JK: {yeah

EP1: support and advocate on the behalf of children and young people,

JK: mmm.

EP1: so yeah, it's frustrating.

JK: Mm. Some people say that, em, EPs work at different levels, you know? So you work at the level of the individual and then at the level of the group or, em school and then at the level of the kind of wider organisation like the local authority. Um, I'm just kind of interested if you think that EPs can or already do eh work collaboratively collaboratively with children and young people at those, at those different levels? You might we might have discussed that already em, but I'm just wondering if you could that prompts any thoughts or ideas.

EP1: Hmm

EP3: I think, I think it probably still does occur mostly at that level of the individual child. I think some of the, em, the kind of development work I suppose that we're thinking about at, at the moment, em, I don't know quite which way it would go, but I guess things like doing sort of EBSA guidance for the council could easily we could be incorporating young peoples

EP1: yeah

EP3: voices into that policy

JK: mmm

EP3: at that level that would be given to a range of different services and schools. So there's, there's scope there and then I'm only mentioning that because that's the group that I've got some bearing of what's going on in. But I know that there's other groups doing other things, and, em, there was the consent forms and em

JK: Mm

EP3: em the young people there were some discussions around at team meetings as well, that

EP1: In terms of, em, fair access panel and the processes in local authority, em, where children are, are brought and discussed between organisations, there's, there's some there's participation and engagement work there around that that hasn't happened, actually, em, and should happen. Young people in [*town name*] should have a voice in what a fair access panel arrangement looks like [laughing] you know and what the experience of that might feel like, what it should feel like. How they'd like, um, adults to speak about them. What information is presented around them

JK: Mmm

EP1: I don't think that they give they are able to give consent to that,

JK: Mmm. Do you have, do you want to tell us a bit more about that or have a sense of, um, kind of what's going on in that situation.

EP1: Okay, so, em, so in [*town name*] it's fair access and I've not I haven't been to those panels. I've been to them in other local authorities, em I think [*local authority name*] was probably the last one. And, they're, they're they're a similar system I think across local authorities in that schools will meet in clusters to discuss inclusion plans or exclusion, em, managed moves, em, and to negotiate, you know, kind of who is going where in terms of eh transferring schools. Em, but those processes tend to be about the people in the room, about the political climate, em about financial constraints em about relationships between schools and SLTs em, and I think that process I mean, we as EPs we're, I can't imagine that a young person going through those processes is ever really clear about what's happening.

JK: Okay,

EP3: No.

EP1: Or informed about what's happening.

EP2: Yeah

EP1: At the very least em

JK: Okay

EP3: I wouldn't want them to hear those conversations from the ones that I've gone to

EP1: No

EP3: They'd be devastating, actually.

JK: Mm.

EP1: I have heard that.

JK: Mhm. Okay. Em. I guess, em, kind of fast forwarding a little bit if you could kind of fast forward yourself to a maybe not forward, but if you could kind of imagine a point, a time in the future when you are working in as an EP or as a group of EPs, you're working in collaboration with children and young people to make meaningful changes to SEND systems. I wonder if you can kind of put yourself in that place and tell me a little bit of what you see and hear and, eh, feel in that situation? What it would be like?

EP1: Sorry Judy, could you repeat that?

JK: Mmm, so I just want you to imagine a time in the future when you are working in collaboration with children and young people, perhaps drawing on some of the experiences that you've had already and perhaps imagining different ways of working because I think we've probably explored both of those already today. So you're imagining a time when you're working in collaboration with children and young people to make meaningful changes to SEND systems. I just wonder if you could describe that a little bit for me in terms of what you think you would, um, how you would experience that? So you might draw on your different senses, to, to describe that?

EP3: Just going off what we were saying about fair access, I I imagine if kids were more involved in and we were working that way and children and young people were more involved then the language that we would hear around children would be very different. I think it would sound, more positive I hope that they would be considered, more as a it's going to sound awful just as a person as a human being

EP1: As an individual.

EP3: Yeah, I think that would be a huge shift because they would be our partners rather than em

EP1: Yeah,

EP3: yeah, I don't know how the

EP1: It would feel respectful

EP3: {Yeah

EP1: and worthwhile and kind of I'm thinking about social justice em it, that feels fitting em that it's a table they should be at.

EP3: Yes

JK: Okay.

EP3: Mhm.

EP2: Mm. I think. Is there something about in the future just is that value that we're putting on the experiences that the children and young people have already had sort of within their within these systems, you know, we need to make sure that they're fully sort of heard and valued in order to inform sort of where we go next, almost? It it needs to be sort of, em, yeah, informed by the the current experiences and making sure that they're heard and valued, I think as well

JK: Mmm, okay,

EP1: I think it would feel, em I think it would make me feel quite energised

EP3: {Mmm

EP1: about my job I think it would feel, em I’d be really motivated and enthusiastic I think in that context, and I I predict or have an expectation that young people would want would have a lot to say and would want to engage.

EP2: Yeah

EP3: Yeah, I think you would get a lot of energy and I think you would almost absorb that from them, wouldn't you, because children and young people do tend to have more, well more energy than I have [laughing],

EP1: Yeah

EP3: but their enthusiasm when they really are being listened to can be huge can't it

EP1: Yeah

EP3: and I think if they were coming to you, really feeling like you were going to help them make these things

EP1: mmm

EP3: happen, I just think you couldn't not be swept up.

EP1: Yeah

EP3: in the enthusiasm they’d bring to that

EP1: Yeah

EP2: It's that feeling of em supporting them to feel empowered, sort of, and that they have a say and an impact in the systems and decisions that are impacting on them and, and like through our conversations, you know, we're supporting that on an individual level, but then trying to make that into a more systemic level, em

JK: Okay

EP2: next.

EP1: I think I'd feel empowered in the work that I do because I get, I feel a sense of frustration when, you almost enable a child to sort of take the lid off their frustration and tell you exactly what's wrong with that teacher and exactly what's wrong with this school em, and be very vocal about that. And I I often feel like I'm carrying that, and I know, and I've heard it. But I can't get any further with it because of the constraints and the values in school. So I'm saying it, I'm advocating and I can't get through em,

JK: okay

EP1: so I think very often our voices at I think what we're trying to achieve in schools might be aligned easily with with this kind of work in terms of

JK: Okay

EP1: yeah if that makes sense?

JK: Yeah, I was, I was going to ask you as a kind of a kind of final question, really around and I'm wondering if you're kind of touching on this ‘EP1’ but you might not be, but I was kind of wondering how you feel this discussion relates to the educational psychologist role as a whole? So in terms of em, how do you think working collaboratively with children and young people to make changes to SEND systems relates to the EP role as a whole?...

EP1: I think it's central, but we don't do it systematically, em, or cohesively. We, we tend to do it on a cumulative basis in a setting, by hearing and advocating and obtaining views and working collaboratively with children and young people about what would help, what helps you in this situation? What would make things better? What can schools do around that change? Em, I think we do that all the time,

JK: mm

EP1: and that you would hope that you know it filters up into and but putting the child at the centre should should influence all of our systemic work across the local authority and as an organisation and in the statutory process, and in that we've thought a lot, I think in terms of our service delivery and our service model, we should have engaged more directly but I think we it it sh those conversations that we're having in all of those different communities should influence our values and principles and in terms of shaping the way that our systems rollout and the way we deliver an interface with community

JK: Mhm.

EP1: but there's a lot of work to be done I think around that.

JK: Yeah, anybody else, your thoughts about that? No, that's fine. It's fine. Um, so as a kind of last thing to talk about really em, so

EP1: can I say something?

JK: Go on , yeah, yeah

EP1: I've just thought of something in terms of processes and bigger and SEND arrangements. I was thinking about how much parents and carers have where the balance is around, shaping services because actually, in terms of equity and in terms of what things look like and what happens out there and what those processes and how much protocol is deviated from, or how it how it plays out

JK: Hmm

EP1: Parent and carer forums are really represented in in shaping those processes

JK: Okay

EP1: in our organisation. And its, it just seems like if we're doing that where are, that that participation work is there,

JK: mm

EP1: but maybe it's not even maybe maybe it's not formalised, maybe it's just the the strength of that voice coming through, but we are responding to that, we are, you know, giving that weight and value. So

JK: mmm

EP3: It's acknowledging isn't it I suppose that that, em, that group as well might have very different views to what the young people themselves

EP1: Exactly yeah,

EP3: want

JK: okay

EP1: Mmm. And I think as well there's work at a hi, you know, at a tribunal level about placement and provision. We've had, em, situations where the parents want something that the young person doesn't

JK: Mm.

EP1: em, and I think at that level it's really important in terms of the role of the EP to, and it's always the EP who obtains views and advocates for the child, whether it's a private or a local authority EP in those situations,

JK: Mm

EP1: it's about named placement em, and I know personally, I've had to sort of I've been the one who has taken a line on that in a lot of those discussions, because it's it’s become very blurred.

JK: Okay,

EP1: Em, yeah, I don't know how relevant that is, but it's just

JK: Mmm it's interesting. Has anybody else get anything that they want? Um, would like to discuss, em, at the end of the, the discussion or anything else you wanted to add or something that was on your mind or a question you wanted to ask of any of us, or? Thoughts and feelings at the end?

EP3: I don't. I think for me it's just opening a bit of a box, I suppose really. In that I know that I don't do this enough

EP1: Mmm

EP3: and, uh and I think there are some things that’d be really nice to sort of develop long term goals, longer term, I don't want to put them so far that we never reach them but the things that we're working towards and there might be some sort of closer, easy

EP1: Mm

EP3: wins that we could be taking.

EP1: Yeah,

JK: Okay

EP3: already.

EP1: Yeah. I agree

JK: Have you got any ideas about that?

EP3: I suppose I am just thinking about things like the EBSA you know, there's doing that at the moment, there’s reason why we shouldn't be involving a young person, em

EP1: Yeah,

EP3: somewhere in that to give their voice and what they would like support to look like

JK: Mm, mm

EP2: Yeah, and that seems like a good opportunity, I guess, in the sense that you know previously we were talking about time and sort of service level agreements as a bit of a barrier, possibly to this and and we have the protected time for those sort of groups and discussions of that, that those projects almost that it it does seem like a good, yeah, opportunity and and and starting point em to make sure that we're getting that collaboration at that level, I guess.

EP3: And a way to sorry, just to develop our confidence doing it I think a little bit because I don't do it enough and it does feel slightly, yeah, slightly unknown, I think, which which I don't want it to be, but it eh

EP2: Yeah

EP1: I was thinking in terms of so we're you know, we're all moving in in our organisation as as under [*department name*] together as specialist support services, em and we're going to look at sort of cross service working groups and I think actually, this is an area where participation, engagement, collaboration, we, it feels like that might be a space where we can think about how we're doing what we're doing, what we're doing and put some goals in, and some aspirations about what that might look like if we were doing this much better.

JK: Mhm.

EP1: So that might that's a potential step, I think.

JK: Mm.

EP1: Because I suspect, actually, some of our other services are probably doing this a lot more

JK: Okay.

EP1: Em and have got better, not not to be critical of

JK: Mm

EP1: probably by the very nature of the work in terms of advocacy and work with family, em, and engaging, for example, with deaf community, em, I think there probably are those links

JK: Mm

EP1: That are stronger.

JK: Can you think of an example of what you mean, or?

EP1: Em, I can't at the moment I'm sorry

JK: No that's okay

EP1: I don't know that I don't know enough about how the other services are engaging with I think group work in terms of [department name] and parent groups are more, em, there's this more feels like there's more scope and I wonder if that's because of the statutory duties that are so heavy for EPs, I wonder if that gets in the way.

JK: Okay

EP1: Of that sort of work, yeah.

JK: Okay, yeah. Em well thanks everybody. In the in the next focus, so we're going to have another focus group, em and you're going to be meeting with a group a group of young people, em, so there's four of them who have volunteered to come forward, em and they're gonna have their own focus group as well. Em, but we're going to be meeting together, em so those young people are active in making changes to SEND systems in this local authority. Em, they're they're also going to meet like you are now to talk about, em, about what they do and how that relates to the work of EPs, em, in the same way that you're thinking about your work and thinking how that relates to children and young people. Em, and it will be, the next focus group is gonna be an opportunity for the two groups to talk and hear about each other's work em and to discuss the idea that EPs and youth groups like theirs could work together in making changes to SEND systems, although we're not, the purpose isn't to make specific plans to do so it's to discuss the idea of that, em and in that I'm gonna be interested again to hear about how you talk about your relationship to the other group. But I just wondered if you'd like to spend some time today discussing or planning em what you might like to tell the other group about about your work? Em, and that might be based on what we've discussed today. Em and I'm also wondering if you'd like to kind of make a note or have a discussion or have a think about what you might like to ask or hear from their group as well, because I am hoping that the discussion will be quite led by, em what yourselves and what the young people bring to the to the meeting.

EP1: Mmm

JK: So I just wondered if you wanted a little bit of space here while we're all together to have a think about that and we could make some notes or em, or we could just have a chat about it as well, that's fine. Would that be a useful thing?

EP1: Mmm

EP2: Yeah.

EP2: Yeah Judy. Sorry. Can I just ask em, you mentioned that this group of young people are, eh, are they already making sort of changes? Or are they part of a youth club?

JK: Yes. So [*group name*] I think it's called. So, em, so they're quite kind of active in, like, an action group. So they're all young people em, who identify as having special educational needs or a disability em and they're active in this group already in in our local authority to be making changes. Em, yeah.

EP2: See, so that might just be because I'm still quite new to the local authority, but yeah, it seems like, well, you know, why haven't we been previously involved [laughing]? Obviously, it's great that, for your thesis to bring us together, but in my head, I'm like, woah I didn't know such groups

EP1: No I didn't

EP2: existed em and that yeah, that would be, em that's a great step forward to meet them em, so

JK: {yeah, yeah

EP2: Are they secondary age, then? Or?

JK: Em, all of the young people who have come forward, actually, so the the the youth group as a whole is I think it's quite a big age range. I think it's 11 to 25

EP2: Right

JK: but, em, these particular four young people, I think are all over 18, actually

EP2: Mmhm

JK: em, who are taking part, so yeah. Anymore, I mean, I'm happy if you've got any more questions about that or anything you'd like to know that kind of helps to give you a little bit of context I'm happy to kind of discuss that now, if that's useful but, so please fire away with questions. But equally it might be that you want to these might be the kinds of prompts, the kind of thoughts that are in your head that you want to ask me might be a, give you a bit of direction as to the kind of things you might like to ask them. I'm not sure.

EP3: Who is it within the local authority that they do, typically, who are they mostly working with as a group?

EP1: Yeah

JK: I don't know actually, I wonder if that I wonder if that's absolutely might be a question. Might that be a question you'd like to ask?

EP1: Yeah

JK: Would it be helpful if I opened a jamboard to make a few notes on? Em I think I can do it from here. And I think it will send you. It says, right it's gonna send you the link to your email. So if you go in there,

EP1: Yep,

JK: click on it. You should you should come in.

EP3: Ah that's very clever.

JK: Okay, yo you all I think yeah, I think that's

EP1: Yeah an, uh, an axe,

JK: an axolotl a duck, and a sheep!

EP1: Yeah [laughing]

JK: Em, so, eh, shall I note that I mean, is have you use jam boards before? Do you know how to how to use this? If you click? See, there's a little thing that says sticky note? If you cross over at the left hand side, there's a little thing that says sticky note. If you click on it, you can write something so I'll just write hi. Um, just to give you an idea. So you can. So, ‘EP3’ there you were saying you had a question there? I think that might come under. That might be something that you might like to ask?

EP3: Yeah, I'd like to know. Em, what did I ask? [laughing] It was who they've got most contact with isn't it

JK: {yeah

EP3: or who they're working with from within the local authority.

JK: Yeah, so could you? Do you know how to do that? Or do you want me to write it for you?

EP3: I'm trying [laughing] but I'm not having much luck!

JK: If you just click on that little thing that looks like a post it note kind of in the middle on the left hand side.

EP2: I don't have that?

EP3: No I don’t

JK: You don't have that? I'll write it it's fine. So the question was, eh who do you have contact with in the local authority? And I'll delete that one. That's annoying that you don't have access to type in it. Never mind. I'll just I'll write the notes.

EP3: I've got I got access to start a presentation which!

JK: Oh! [laughing]

EP2: For me is there something about I don't know? Yeah how do, how do the views of everyone in the in the group get captured I guess? You know, is it just one person just bringing something they're concerned about or yeah how does how does it, I guess, yeah, their views escalate almost, you know, to it then becoming a change if that makes sense? I don't know how to put that into a post it note, but yeah, I guess it's how, how are their views shared and captured, something like that, maybe?

EP1: Yeah, or to what extent

EP2: Yeah

EP1: do they think that that's happened? Or examples of of how that's worked effectively? Or

EP2: Mmhmm

EP1: I'd like to know what their experiences have been of collaboration

JK: mmm

EP1: and how that's felt

JK: I’m just, right, so shall I say, to what extent do they think their ideas have made an impact?

EP1: Yeah.

JK: So is that what you meant?

EP2: Yeah. Can we have, like, a really open ended question like, em yeah, tell us, can you tell us about your experiences of sort of yeah, em making changes at that level with the LA just yeah, whether that's been sort of positive, negative, challenging?

JK: Yep

EP1: Mhm

JK: So these are these are all questions, have you got more there’s that’s quite like that feels like quite a lot kind of sprang to mind there. Is there more, would you say, in terms of questions?

EP1: Is there something about, em, their experiences of working or their understanding of our work, as EPs

EP3: {Mm

EP1: and what that looks like? Whether or not they've experienced collaboration with us? How that's felt?

JK: Right, I'll fix the spelling afterwards [laughing]. Em, I mean, in terms of that, I wonder if there's anything that you'd like to share with them as a kind of a starting point? I suppose what I was kind imagining is that at the beginning, there might be an opportunity for both groups to just talk a little bit about about what they do, so you can talk about a little bit what you do, and they can talk a bit about what they do. And then you can have, you know, kind of questions based on that, but are there kind of key things that you might like to tell them about what you do? And that could be anything, really.

EP1: I'd quite like to tell them about what our values and our principles are in terms of our model of the way we what we hope to do because then it would be interesting to find out whether or not their, their perception of what of what we do matches that, em in terms of advocating and in terms of, em, obtaining views. And and being child centred,

JK: mm, sorry, advocating, eh, what was the second?

EP1: child's child at centre of involvement, em, and I suppose coproduction and coplanning.

JK: Okay

JK: Is there anything particularly from today that em, that we've discussed that sticks in your mind or you think kind of key points or anything? Anything we've covered today that you think would be useful for them to hear about?

EP2: Mm, I guess it might, it might be helpful to tell them about sort of the working at the different levels maybe of what our role can include. Em, yeah because then almost their views can be captured at different levels you know, as part of our work at each of those levels, we should be, sort of, involving them in each of those stages, almost, you know, from the individual level right up to as we're trying with your thesis, just yeah, about that strategic level, I guess.

JK: Yeah. Anything else from today?

EP1: I suppose, em, about what their, what they see as barriers to engagement, and participation in developing SEND systems, what they see as barriers.

JK: That's a kind of question, really, isn't it?

EP1: Yeah.

JK: Change my colour. I don't know if you've noticed my code here? Yellow ones are questions. The blue ones are more things that you're telling them. Anything else?

EP3: Eh, so I'm not really sure how I'd phrase this but it's something about how, how they make contact with different or how someone helps them to make contact with different services and helps them to understand what's in the local au because what's really I can't just keep coming back to it but I've got no idea what these young people have been asking for em, that's not come down to me

EP1: {Yeah

EP3: or been shared with the service as far as I'm aware at any point. And so then it's quite difficult to be supporting their aims

JK: Mmm, okay

EP3: Em, yeah, and I don't want them to feel like we're not getting messages,

EP1: Mmm

EP3: that they think we should have had or anything like that, so I'm quite cautious about em

JK: Yeah,

EP3: yeah, but there's something about yeah, because it's a really it's a confusing system in local authorities and I think trying to understand the process as parents and what exists and it's ha, hard. So it's how someone's made some of that accessible.

EP1: Yeah it's how accessible is the information around the systems for them

EP3: Yeah.

JK: Yep. So there will be an opportunity as well to kind of, um like I say, there's going to be a discussion. I'm hoping that we have a discussion, em, where you can tell them, like I say, you can kind of share stuff and you can ask questions of each other. I'm hoping that there will be an opportunity as well to kind of think about what working together might look like. And I don't know if you've got a, if we need to plan that at all, em or if it feels like that could be quite, em, could come quite organically from the discussion? Or is there anything in particular you want to think about? And like I say the empha, I do want to be clear, that the emphasis is not particularly on in terms of my thesis research, you know, in terms of what I’ve kind of set up here, it's not about creating a plan to take action on, its more kind of exploring that as an idea, em

EP1: Em, I wonder if there's em it's looking at engagement and collaborative work across those levels. So what would it look like at individual level? What would it look like in terms of your school or your year group? Em, or your community? What would it look like em, in terms of [*town name*] it's about maybe looking at some discussion at those levels and what they perceive would be helpful and ideal in those at those different levels.

JK: Mm.

EP1: My little one's just rolled his eyes at me [laughing]. Oh dear no-one takes me seriously in my house [laughing]

JK: Em, so that might be about asking some of those, em, future focused types of questions then?

EP1: Yeah, yeah

JK: Em and trying to kind of do some imagining.

EP1: Yeah,

JK: together

EP1: Yeah. Mm.

JK: Anything else?

EP2: I don't know if it's worth sort of trying to have a think about with them what they want those discussions to look like, you know, in a way that they feel comfortable, you know, is that with sort of, em a big group of other children and young people is that more in a smaller group is it sort of, em, you know, drawing and more visuals or yeah, just maybe just having a think with them if there's ways to really support them to to engage in that coproduction, I guess. And that collaboration, maybe. Um, yeah. And what that might look like.

JK: Yeah.

EP1: Yeah.

EP3: Because there's something about making that very accessible to all different young people isn't there and I suppose some kids are, will be much more comfortable doing that in a in a group and advocating for themselves than others

JK: Mmm

EP3: and kind of how all the different voices are captured?

JK: Mmm

EP2: Yeah. Yeah. And I guess yeah addressing the, a barrier, you know, say if someone has a need in a particular area, that's then not the barrier to them being able to engage in those conversations and discussions, however they form I guess.

JK: Mm, okay.

TRANSCRIPTION STOPPED AT THIS POINT AS THE REMAINING DISCUSSION WAS JUST ABOUT LOGISTICS OF NEXT MEETING

# Appendix P: YPs’ Focus Group Transcript

**Young people’s focus group transcript**

JK: Facilitator (me)

YP1: Youth participant 1

YP2: Youth participant 2

YP3: Youth participant 3

YP4: Youth participant 4

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| { | Overlap in conversational turns indicated by left hand bracket |
| [?text] | Unclear speech (where transcription may be inaccurate) |
| [?] | Small segment of inaudible text |
| [????] | Longer segment of inaudible text |
| [laugh] | Information on non-linguistic features, like laughing |
| ... | Long pause (longer than 4 seconds) |
| [*italicised text*] | Text which has been changed to ensure anonymity |
| (INTERRUPTION) | Interruption (where transcript stopped/started) |
| (…SECTION REMOVED…) | Small section of text removed to protect confidentiality of participant |

(Transcript started after icebreaker activity which included some personal information)

JK: Have you? You guys are involved in so much stuff, I’m really interested in hearing about it. I mean, my next kind of question was really about em being involved in this group, actually, because it sounds like you all individually, do lots of really interesting things. I was interested in what kind of things you do as a group and if you could just tell me a bit about that. Maybe thinking about the things that are important to you about being in this group or what are the best, or most frustrating things about being involved in the group

[laughing]

JK: tell me a bit, tell me a bit about it because I’m completely new to this group

[laughing]

YP2: I’ll let you [laughing]

YP3: Oh let’s say the frustrating because that will save people’s names

YP2: Oh yeah, yeah

JK: yeah, try to be eh respectful, and em, anonymous confidential with people’s information as well

YP4: Just give them false names.

JK: So tell me, I would love to hear a bit about what you do and how you feel about that

YP2: Shall I?

YP3: It’s up to you

YP1: I can go if you want

YP2: Yeah I’ll let you

YP1: Eh, so this group’s basically helps to inform decision makers on stuff what we want to see. So, like, for example, the SEND strategy plan we've fed back into that to shape that plan because actually, it's more important that actually the young people gets to shape the plan because it's the young people who’s going to use them services. And it's also about looking about other stuff so, for example, when transition to adult services at the moment there's no communication for them young people to know what's going to happen,

JK: Okay

YP1: and we've been shaping that feeding back to that so it's about making sure that we put ourselves forward to decision makers to actually say, “this is what we want. This is how it should happen”

JK: Right

YP1: “and this is what we need” because unfortunately, like many towns and cities young people don't get listened to. But luckily now there is something there to start pushing back and say, “Have you thought about this? Have you thought about that?”

JK: Right

YP1: Because people in the decision-making roles mostly do not understand SEND and stuff like that,

JK: Okay

YP1: They’ve not come from a SEND background they’ve not thing, so it's about us putting our names forward and saying this is what we want to see and we're willing to work with you as long as you are willing to listen to us and thing so, that’s the most important thing.

JK: Fantastic, sounds really valuable. I mean how does it, how does it feel being part of that?

YP3: Em it kind of makes you feel like a bit more valued within the community

JK: {Okay

YP3: I mean, there's still obviously a lot of like discrimination issues and stuff like that but being able to like having someone to support you to be able to put your voice across and things

JK: Mm mm

YP3: that's really like, helpful because it makes you feel like you’re a bit an important part of the community.

JK: Okay

YP3: And it gives you, I don’t know what the word for it is, but, like, it makes you feel better about yourself and also it’s good to, because you know you’ve done something to help someone else.

JK: Okay

YP3: Somebody who doesn’t have the ability or the confidence to maybe

JK: Okay

YP3: like take part and stuff

JK: Right so it's not just about your kind of experience, it's also about thinking about the kind of community of young people that you’re part of?

YP1: Yeah

YP3: Like a lot of young people with SEND find it hard to advocate for them,

JK: Find it what sorry?

YP3: find it hard to like advocate for their own needs and stuff, so, this is a good way to do that

JK: Yeah

YP3: But obviously the se, like the sessions we do are very important because we’ve got young people from all backgrounds so we’ve got some what are a bit more on the quiet side and stuff but it’s like it still gives them something to do and makes them feel like they’re part of a group

JK: Okay, yeah, great

YP3: And another positive thing like with the sessions and stuff is like we get like emotional support and stuff off the workers

JK: Okay

YP3: Which originally when it first started, I don’t want to start on fully negative like but the old worker we had like she is nice and stuff like but she were a bit more just business

JK: Okay

YP3: That so we’ve got, thingy, she’s a bit more, she cares about our wellbeings and stuff so we get extra support and things

JK: So does that feel like that's quite an important part of being in this group? That it’s not just business it’s also support with, I don’t know, maybe other stuff that's going on

YP4: Yeah

JK: in your lives as well, Okay,

YP2: It's also quite a nice like social thing as well. Just being able to chat with others

JK: {Okay

YP2: and stuff like that. So alongside the work, we do have the occasional banter and stuff like that.

YP3: Some arguments

YP2: And eh

JK: And what sorry?

YP3: Em, one of the, one of the member’s we’ve got he’s very, like it’s his views or no views

JK: {Okay

YP3: And it’s like, doing this it helps us to limit that type of stuff in a way

JK: Okay

YP3: Because obviously everyone's got the right to their voice and stuff but and [?] Sometimes you want to tell, like you want to tell them to shut up and stuff and I have slapped him a few times but it’s like it’s having to learn to deal with that and be patient a bit and stuff

JK: {Okay so you kind of learn skills as well, or, yeah. Sorry [*name*] did I interrupt you?

YP2: {No it’s fine

JK: {When you were about to say something

YP2: Yeah, em so it's basically allowing us to connect more,

JK: Mmm

YP2: eh, and then be able to, like, work on our own individual stuff.

JK: Yeah

YP2: If we feel like we want to.

JK: OK,

YP2: em, we're already in the process of doing stuff aren’t we? Eh and em it's em, it’s a nice thing because then it feels like we're able to connect with the community and then be able to then

[?]

YP2: Mhm? No I’m not

YP3: Remember to say when you’re saying that, mention about the adult group

YP2: Yeah I will, yeah

JK: {Go on then, that sounds interesting yeah

YP2: Em, so because of that we found a gap in like services

JK: Okay

YP2: to do with eh catering for people who are above 25 years old

JK: Ah right okay

YP2: And eh a lot of the times like job opportunities and, em, other opportunities to, like, put on events and stuff like that.

JK: Hmm

YP2: We, people with SEND, are not really given a good stand in that,

JK: Okay

YP2: Em, mainly because of a multitude of reasons which I won't go into but em, so that's why eh

JK: Oh, has she got a nosebleed?

YP2: Yeah

JK: Shall we just pause

(INTERRUPTION)

JK: So that's, it sounds like there's lots of really interesting things that you're doing, but also that you're kind of experiencing as part of the group as well. Skills that you're learning and em the support you're getting from being part of this group. Em and I suppose it was quite a kind of interested in the idea that you're kind of making change you're making changes to SEND special educational needs and disabilities systems or services. I was wondering what that we kind of talked about it already I suppose but I was just wondering what your experience of that is like, and has it been a positive experience, or do you enjoy it or are there things about it that you can tell me about that?

YP3: Can you repeat that?

JK: Say again?

YP3: Can you repeat that bit again please?

JK: Yeah, sorry, em, so I’m just saying, as part of this group you’re obviously kind of involved in making changes to SEND systems and I just wondered if you can you tell me a bit about what that is like that experience of making making changes, maybe, I don’t know, something you have enjoyed about it, or frustrations, or just a description of what it’s like being part of that?

YP4: Well, I enjoy that we are trying to like work with other services

JK: {Okay

YP4: such as mental health, to like help young people, children and young people with their mental health

JK: Okay,

YP4: because like nearly all our experience with the mental health service ant always been great has it?

YP2: No

JK: Okay,

YP3: Understatement

JK: Okay

YP4: Like due to different ones, like I had never heard of CAMHS so my mental health it deteriorated when I were about nearly 18

JK: Okay

YP4: Because I ended up doing therapy at [named] centre.

JK: Okay I don’t know

YP4: It is that int it? That one near the fire station?

JK: It doesn’t matter the name of it for me

YP4: Yeah, like I ended up, at first, I did therapy, and I were fine, but halfway through it, my mental health went from that all the way down there

JK: Okay

YP4: and that was to do with the therapist

JK: Ah I’m sorry

YP4: Because like I basically got upset at college and so my parents had to come and pick me up. So they phoned and said, “Look, this has happened”

JK: Okay

YP4: The psychologist just turned around and said, “Oh I think your parents are being overprotective over you”

JK: Ah, okay

YP2: What?

YP4: Yeah, just, like, basically just said that to me,

JK: Right

YP4: I told my dad, but I timed it a bit better this time [laughs] I told him once he left the building

JK: Did you feel that you really had to kind of manage that conversation?

YP4: Well, my dad would have just gone in and told her straight

JK: Right

YP4: So I’m like, not telling him until we're going out of this building.

JK: Right okay

YP4: So then that's when my mental health went down, like, Christmases were the worst for me,

JK: Oh

YP4: And then I ended up going again and this one was a really nice one

JK: Oh good

YP4: So that was great. But then it deteriorated when I were doing Health and Social Care. I think you've got, like, level two, no level th

JK: Mmhmm

YP4: And, so I ended up going to IAPT

JK: Okay

YP4: because college couldn't do anything

JK: {Right

YP4: because they just basically said it’s “oh it’s because you’ve got special educational needs so we can't do anything so we're going to pass you on to IAPT”

JK: Okay

YP4: IAPT then tried to pass me onto [*named centre*].

JK: Oh I see

YP4: And then [*named centre*] said “Oh, no, she’s not that bad, so we can’t accept her” so back to IAPT

JK: Right

YP4: And then once they knew, then at the end [*named centre*] found out, oh I’ve got an high HQ and that “Oh no she’s too intelligent for us”

JK: Oh

YP4: So then it's like, well, where do I go now?

JK: So you’ve definitely got your own kind of personal experience with mental health services and is that something you felt that you're able to, kind of I don’t know maybe talk about as part of your group work here?

YP4: Yeah

JK: as well then?

YP4: But I know like two other members have had their own experience, ant they?

YP2: Yeah

JK: Okay

(…SECTION REMOVED…)

JK: Okay but it sounds like within the group then we've got a lot of personal experiences

YP2: Mm

JK: of services

YP1: Yeah

JK: and and hea I’m what I suppose I’m kind of imagining is that this is a place where you can work together to make some changes to those services as well, or is that an assumption?

YP1: We, we, we have been working on it

JK: Yeah

YP1: the mental health charter

JK: Ah okay

YP1: And we've been working on that for a while,

JK: Yeah

YP3: With [*named local organisation*] and stuff

YP1: and it's about making sure that we shape not just services in the council it's about shaping services outside external partners,

JK: Okay

YP1: stakeholders. And so that's why [*named local organisation*], eh, MIND and stuff like that.

YP3: [*named organisation*]

YP1: and I think that's [*named organisation*] with with the wonderful member who I’ve met, eh he’s me manager

YP3: Which one?

YP1: [*named person*].

YP3: [?]

YP1: So, uh, it's really important that we actually shape them services and we were putting ourselves this mental health charter forward because it sets out what we want to see,

JK: Okay

YP1: and it basically embeds the stories which is person A has said and person B’s said,

JK: Yeah okay and does it, what's that experience like I wonder? Do you feel that it’s having an impact? Or is it a positive experience?

YP1: I think we are definitely having an impact, and it's empowering young people. I think, for many on the older end, so getting into 25, getting into 24, we're not going to see them changes to them young people’s services,

JK: Okay

YP1: so they're going to know that it's actually benefited them young people but it's disappointing that them services which have helped shaped and thing, we don't s get to see the results when we get to adult services

JK: Okay

YP1: because we don't shape them adult services yet

JK: Okay

YP1: We are pushing towards that and say “we want to see these changes and we want it so it's basically nearly a continuation from adults, that young people services to adult

JK: {Okay

YP1: services to make it simple but it's still a big issue

JK: {So you’d like to see a link between those different types of services

YP1: {Yeah,

YP4: Yeah

YP2: and yeah

YP3: I mean similar what like [*YP1 name*] said well I mean because I do work with [*local organisation name*] and we give like mental health support to other young people like going to high schools do like 1:1’s group work and stuff and it’s just, although for me personally I might not see the changes happening for my own benefit it’s going to benefit other young people and like I can say mental health services have come I mean there’s still a long way to go but from when I was technically in like CAMHS and stuff like this it’s there’s still issues but it’s a bit more thingy because of the work like we’ve been doing and what I assume young people in other areas have done, because personally (…SECTION REMOVED 35:35-35:53…) so my mental health did take a really big decline but this school and then the educational psychologist didn’t really do much with it

JK: Okay

YP3: Because they because obviously being autistic a lot of like the signs and symptoms of mental health and things are

JK: Okay

YP3: like linked and although I’m still not great at expressing my feelings but back then I were like, I didn’t know how to say it and like I didn’t have the confidence to be able to

JK: Okay

YP3: Even though there weren’t really [*local organisation name*] or stuff like that where there was somewhere like you could go

JK: Mmm

YP3: And open up a bit more freely

JK: Okay

YP3: and it were all just very clinical so

JK: Yeah yeah

YP3: but it’s like, now, I mean there’s still is problems but it’s like because we’ve got the other services like [*local organisation name*] and things it’s more opportunity to open up

JK: Mmm

YP3: because with us at [*local organisation name*] we only like it’s like a judgemental free thing when young people open up so they can they can come and tell us about like if they’ve done like crack or weed or something on a weekend if they’ve been like self-harming and stuff like that and it’s just unless it’s like a direct safeguarding issue

JK: Mm

YP3: we don’t pass it on because we’ve got us own procedures and stuff to do anyway

JK: Okay

YP3: so it don’t get passed to the school

JK: Okay

YP3: And the school are aware we don’t do it so it’s [?] it’s geeing them somewhere to open up like free of judgement

JK: Okay

YP3: which there weren’t much of that back in our like childhoods

JK: Right so it feels like you're actually able to put into action some of the changes that you would like to see

YP3: Yeah,

JK: and the things that you would have liked to have seen when you were younger

YP3: And I think work we have been doing has helped quite a bit

JK: Okay

YP3: There’s still more stuff to do which when we get like other younger people into the group I assume it will be different because some of us are a bit inappropriate at times but it’s like I think it would be useful for them as well to have that experience

JK: Mmm

YP3: And to like shape it further because times are going to change again

JK: Yes

YP3: And it’s going to be other issues more things going off

JK: Thinking about I’ve a lot of interest obviously in the other bit of it I’m interested in how you work with other people outside of this group to make changes so maybe like working in partnership with, em uh I don’t know other organisations or other with like professionals, or different groups, I was wondering if you’ve got kind of experience of that?

YP3: [*local organisation name*]

JK: Okay

YP3: And em [*local organisation name*] I’m not going to talk about that right now but we have been doing quite a bit of work with [*local organisation name*] which is a mental health organisation

JK: Mm

YP3: So I’ve not been involved in a lot of it because the work in it always overlaps with other stuff but it’s like we’ve done a lot of stuff with them and it’s like as well as it being good for getting like our voices out and stuff

JK: Mm

YP3: From a professional standpoint as well it’s because you get to meet other organisations

JK: Mm

YP3: So like yesterday they had like this they were doing this event up at [local organisation name] so it were like all different like youth organisations like mental health stuff, sexual health and things like that and it were, you got, you like got to meet other professionals seeing more like what they do and it’s, there’s some of us, like Cheesy here, wanted to, like wants to, wanted to go into like youth work

JK: Okay

YP3: And he kind of had like the opportunity to talk to

JK: Okay

YP3: other people and get their experiences and how to get into it

JK: {Yeah so it’s actually thinking about your kind of personal journeys as well and thinking about that side of it as well

YP3: Yeah and it’s good for them. Because we’re young people what other young people what came from the other services they got to be informed of, like our services

JK: Yeah

YP3: so like how we can like help them and stuff so it's getting that wider community

JK: Mm. Because you were saying about kind of work that you've done as a group in terms of like influencing em like the SEND strategy and

YP1: yeah

JK: the mental health charter as well. Do you work with other with other people as part of that, do you have contact with?

YP1: So one of the main things is we try and invite people to this place, eh, the [*venue name*] and the reason why I think it really works we invite em because actually, us as young people whose got special educational needs feel a lot more safe and sitting here speaking out loud than saying what we want to say to them decision makers and listening to like, for example, feeding back to the strategies with like, [*person’s name*] and stuff like that than going into a boardroom in the council

JK: Okay

YP1: and talking about stuff because I think it's very intimidating for them people

JK: Mmm

YP1: and I think it's about making sure that actually we speak up and we've got the confidence we know that I can say to person A and person B they can back me up. I think if you're in the boardroom

JK: Mmm

YP1: and stuff like that, you don't feel the confidence to speak up about the strategies and stuff like that. And I think it's really important eh, we've invited we've also like gave feedback so like we've looked at it before and thought what is this sham? So like there were a questionnaire with like 80 questions,

YP2: Oh my god [laughing]

YP1: and it were like how does a person in Year 8 supposed to answer this thing when it were just completely utterly bonkers? And I mean, we've got the staff to look at it, and they thought it were they thought it were for them

JK: Right

YP3: And they probably wouldn’t fill it in

YP2: It was terrible, honestly [laughing]

YP4: Em, plus it was like aimed at schools but not everyone will go to school, they’ll be like home schooled

JK: Right okay

YP4: And like say there's a teacher walking round and they see the question then the young person might feel pressured into like answering it so that the teacher looks good

JK: Hmm

YP4: but if they’re home schooled it's the parents

JK: Right

YP4: so then they don't want to, like, make their parents look bad

JK: Hmm

YP4: because at the end of the day they're living with them.

JK: Yes,

YP2: not only that, there was a lot of sensitive questions

JK: Okay

YP2: very, very personal questions to the point of which, eh, it can almost out them,

JK: Right okay

YP2: and it's like, this is a kind of like a breach of safeguarding

JK: Right okay it didn't feel

YP2: It didn’t, it didn’t feel like eh, they were protected in any way

JK: Right

YP2: shape or form, em, because it were literally talking about drugs, alcohol, em, sexual abuse.

JK: Okay

YP2: Very, very heavy topics

JK: Yeah yeah

YP2: em for someone who, who’s quite young, who will be answering those questions is eh, quite eh a massive thing em but the concern was like if, like, they get ri, if like stuff like Police get involved and stuff like that and then it becomes it gets even worse the situation

JK: Mmm

YP2: because then the school will be like oh, em, we just noticed that this young person’s doing all this bad

JK: Mm

YP2: thing, then it's like, instead of actually helping them get out of, say, like an addiction from drugs or something like that they’ll just go oh you get expelled or excluded

JK: Okay

YP2: Or thing

YP1: we'll just send you to another place so we don't have to deal with you

YP2: Yeah, that's pretty much what it is

YP1: And I think I think stuff like that means, basically, us to be consulted with how to arrange the questions so it's not too personalised, but it's more easier and more approachable to answer

JK: {Okay

YP1: and if it's information they need, it needs to make sure that it's anonymous

JK: Mmm

YP1: so making sure that it's also explained because it wasn't explained if it's going to be used or

JK: Mmm

YP1: anything like that and it's like, how can we trust in the system? And the system’s never given us stuff back to us when we've been through it so like getting, our, for example, diagnosises takes years and years, and people just feel that if we're going to put stuff back into the system, what were we going to gain? We're not going to gain anything more likely we're going to get into trouble they would feel

JK: Right okay

YP1: And I think that's really important. It’s like the bullying charter what we've just recently done and fed back to. Eh I weren’t there on Tuesday, but we developed a bullying charter because actually, we didn't feel that schools were taking it on, and the way with schools were basically not even reporting it to their systems, putting it through the thing so it looked like OFSTED were thinking, “Well, there's only been two bullying cases throughout the year”, but we know for a fact there's more than thing

YP2: Actually, eh when we looked at it, no schools actually implemented the bullying charter, anti-bullying charter and em we were trying to discuss ways on how we can, like take schools into account

JK: Mm

YP2: for those things

JK: Mm

YP2: because a lot of the times like what person A

YP1: D [laughing]

YP2: Person D yeah [laughing]

YP3: Person G! [laughing]

YP2: Eh [laughing]

YP1: YP1! [laughing]

YP2: Oh god [laughing]. Em, it it's the fact that they, em, oh god my mind

JK: Don’t worry, don’t worry that happens to me all the time.

YP2: Could you just refresh it

YP1: So basically we would it's about the bullying charter

JK: Yeah

YP1: and feeding back to it and as person A said schools don’t really want to take that on board

JK: Right

YP1: and I think the issue with that is a lot of schools are technically academised so there's no local power anymore

JK: {Yeah

YP2: {Yeah yeah

YP1: and I think what we've got to do as young people is try and get schools to sign up to it by pushing them by demanding signing letters eh, pushing it forward, but also getting people to sponsor it so maybe getting like universities to say well this is a good idea

JK: Yeah

YP1: because if a university says that a school might take it on board because they want to be the poster child

YP2: Yeah

YP1: to send out thing,

JK: Okay

YP1: “Oh, we've got a a person who said that, oh, you're never going to get a grade you're never going to get anywhere in life” and it's basically once that person gets somewhere and they're the poster child, they're more willing to take that on board and it's really really arra aggravating

YP3: Unless schools are inviting you to open days and crap

JK: Right

YP3: So they take the school a good school that’s inclusive and all this

YP4: I just think schools needs to be more educated that bullying does happen

JK: Okay

YP4: because I think they just think oh bullying don't exist, even though they have got people saying look I'm getting bullied by

JK: {yeah

YP4: {these people they go “Oh, no, you might just misunderstood it”, and then it makes you feel like you're the victi,

JK: {yeah

YP4: {like getting singled out because “Aw they've got special needs so we can gang up on them”.

JK: Right

YP4: But if they tell a teacher they won't do anything because they'll just turn around and say “Oh you're not understanding it or” because person one did this that time and then a few minutes later, person A person B did that so it's basically, even though it's counted as bullying it's like in separate incidents,

JK: okay

YP4: So, like, they're not going to do anything if it's just separate incidents than just like they are, just ignore them.

JK: So they’re not making the connections between things

YP4: no

YP3: They’re more bothered about OFSTED and grades now

YP2: {Yeah, and also it's like

YP3: Grades and like schools profile rather than actually dealing with or they don’t deal with real life incidents, like with work like once every so often we do like this, I would say it's a consultation we fill this anonymous questionnaire in. So like it's got it's got like how often do you cry, do you suffer with like mental health it’s just like yes no so it's like quick like do you use like substance misuse and all this

JK: Mm

YP3: so it's like all anonymised when we do it and stuff but when we take it back to school and we’re like there’s still these issues like half of some of it is to get funding but some of it’s to say there’s still a lot of issues in place and we still need to support the young people. But one of the high schools we do it at their like safeguarding do you know like [?] I don’t know what role she does but like she’s in charge, so she gets us coming in. So we was saying, we need to do more work in this school because there’s like all these issues

JK: Mm

YP3: because she’s saying “Oh, there's no issues in school” then she says, we could do like friendships, like maybe friendship problems since Covid,

JK: Mm

YP3: because they’ve got obviously took a bit of an issue

JK: Yeah

YP3: but

JK: I'm gonna I’m going to move us on a a little bit, I’m just slightly conscious of time actually, I want to make sure that some of the questions I wanted to make sure I really asked asked you about I wanted to hear what you had to say about this. Em sorry if I cut you off there did you was there something you wanted to finish?

YP3: I can, that is the summary of it pretty much the school's avoid the actual issues that are in place because they don’t want to look bad

JK: {Okay

YP3: rather than deal with it

JK: That’s a real insight actually. Em, so I’m, wond, interested in hearing about any experiences you’ve had of working with educational psychologists as part of your work with this group or examples that you might have of em working in partnership with educational psychologists on SEND systems

YP4: This is our first one in’t it? Like we've never got given this opportunity before,

JK: Okay

YP2: No

JK: So this is the first time?

YP2: I think this is actually the first time that we would do.

JK: Okay, okay. Em, and do you have ideas or experiences that you’d be happy to share? And like there's no pressure at all but any ideas maybe about what you think educational psychologists do, like what you think the job is about?

YP1: For me I could be completely wrong but it's like they help you with your diagnosis and stuff like that and they’re sometimes they can be, for example, the main like SENCOs and stuff like that, but more detailed in their what they do and stuff like that

JK: Okay,

YP1: And I think a lot of people whose

(INTERRUPTION – a few seconds)

YP1: and basically like the for example, getting diagnoses and stuff like that I think that process is very complicated and very eh, very strange. So, for example, if, for example, you go for ADHD and you try and see if it's got that once they say “No, it's not that” it's not like you're going to get referred to another service to try and figure out what it could be.

JK: Mmm

YP1: It’s you've got to try and figure out what it is

YP2: {Yeah

YP1: for that service to then say, “Oh, yes, you've got that tick, you've got that box, we can help you”.

JK: okay

YP1: If you don't have that it's a of course, and it's basically back to square one,

JK: Right okay

YP2: And you can be put on multiple waiting lists that can go on for years and years and years to the point of where it's like

YP3: And you get put on the child waiting list when you wanted to get on adult waiting list

YP2: Yeah

YP3: Just as long

JK: And do you feel that educational psychologists are quite part of that experience, of those processes?

YP2: Em, this is what I want to find out

JK: Okay

YP2: because I'm interested in to see why the waiting lists are so long

JK: Okay

YP2: And

YP3: Because there’s that many issues

YP2: Yeah,

JK: Okay

YP2: and the more admin side of things to do with like how come there's a backlog,

JK: Mmm

YP2: and how can that be resolved?

JK: Do you feel that something you'd like to ask of educational psychologists

YP2: Yep

YP1: Yes

JK: That’s interesting. Em at the end we'll have time even if it’s just five minutes, because I think we’re running over slightly but if if we could have five minutes you could make a note

YP3: They’re [?], they’re fine

JK: Are they alright?

YP1: Yeah [laughing]

JK: Make a bit of a note of the kinds of things that you might like to ask, because in our in our next group, in our next discussion group we’ll be meeting with educational psychologists, it's an opportunity to ask questions, but also for you to tell them about what you what you do as well. And I know, having spoken to them they’re really interested to hear about your group as well. Just just before we get to that one last little thing I wanted to do with you was almost like kind of a, I don’t know like what you might call a thought experiment or something so I wonder if you could imagine a time in the future? It might be in a year or two years’ time. If you could try to imagine a time when you could potentially be working with educational psychologists as part of your group work. And I wonder what you imagine when you think of that? What would that be like? What would it what would you be doing with them? And what what would the experience be like? Imagine, I don’t know how difficult that is but if you can imagine yourself in that situation?

YP3: I mean personally for me I did get quite good support from the educational psychologist with most stuff apart from the sleeping tablets which he didn't give me but just before I got discharged he said “Oh I could have given you some of these and it would have been useful”. But I think like, when we are working wi em most educational psychologists are quite positive and useful so

JK: Okay

YP3: And I think it's like the quick way to get to the root of the bottom of like mental health, SEND issues and stuff, because that's where a lot of the support and the diagnosises and things start so like trying so it's like you need to get to the root of the issue to deal with the other issues.

JK: Yeah, okay that’s interesting. So you think it could be a positive experience?

YP3: Yeah,

JK: Anybody else?

YP4: I’d really like to help them understand their awareness of SEND and like mental health

JK: Okay

YP4: because its easy for them to like, say, “oh there's like all these” and that but if they don't really understand what we're going through

JK: Mmm

YP4: then it they could, like, say, “Oh, yeah, this will do this will help and that” but if our heads aren’t working like how they think they are

JK: Okay

YP4: Then it's not going to like give us that help

JK: Okay

YP4: So it would be, even though we're trying to like, psychiatrist might think, oh they’re going like steps forward and might be going step backwards instead,

JK: Yeah okay

YP2: and I do think it's being about transparency

JK: {okay

YP2: to do with, em, specific, em, like details, of the diagnosis.

JK: Okay

YP2: So em because, like just like what the person said before me is that it's good to put into from theory from psy psychology

JK: Mmm

YP2: to try and figure out what what is the appropriate diagnosis for the individual, em, but sometimes even from that diagnosis, it can deviate a little

JK: okay

YP2: and it's being able to understand that it's from an individual basis

JK: Right okay

YP2: rather than a group

JK: Yeah

YP2: and, em, because I've actually done research into eh autism, and stuff like that so I know quite a lot about it but em it is about being transparent and basically giving them the straight up like all of the actual condition itself

JK: Mmm

YP2: and then saying there is ways but there's very different ways

JK: Yeah

YP2: like it's not just one particular route to go down.

JK: Yeah

YP2: there's several different routes.

JK: Yeah, okay

YP1: I think for me, what I want to see in the future is for them to come here

JK: Right

YP1: and to speak with us to help shape the services because I want to see where the system is basically, if you get referred they are going to look at, not just one part of maybe your diagnosis but the other parts and I think once they do that, I think the waiting lists will go down because it's like going on another waiting list

JK: {Right

YP1: for maybe dyslexia

YP2: {Yeah

YP1: So, for example, for myself, I've been told by my student mentor, so like university so it's like a staff member “Why are you not been diagnosed with eh dyslexia?” I've gone on to this like something in [*town name*] which is like job support to help me to try and find a job and they said, “We can't understand why the school never referred you for dyslexia”

JK: Mmm

YP3: Because they wouldn’t [?]

YP1: and it were, well I nearly got it it were never what would failed.

YP3: [?]

YP1: so it just really shows so, actually, I think the services needs to stop concentrating and having tunnel vision in one aspect and try and think could that person need that additional support? Because once that’s in place, then I think it would be a much more faster service at responding to people who’s getting referred instead of picking one and then getting told, in like maybe three or five years getting another person referred that that same person getting referred again to go all the way through that system, and it's just wasting time

JK: {Yeah

YP1: where basically, if it can be all compassed together, I think it would be much more simple and easier. And I think it'd be better on that young person, because they'll see that same person throughout the sys throughout the process and be able to know this is what what, what I have issues with. And this is what I can deal with like, for example, when getting a job and stuff like that. You know that there's going to be issues, but you don't know what support you might need in the future. So like computers, software, spell checkers and stuff like that

YP2: The only problem is

JK: {It’s fine keep talking, I’m just going to grab this piece of paper because I thought we could just write down anything you think would be useful to but feel free to talk,

YP2: Yep, eh the only problem that faces that sort of centralisation of services is eh more to do with em that people, eh they get trained into, like, a specific type of like say cond like condition diagnosis

JK: Okay

YP2: so they’ll be only specialised in like autism

JK: Right

YP2: or specialised in dyslexia. I don't know how that's going to translate into resources and

JK: Mm

YP2: time constraints about having psychologists now trained eh being trained and into like all

JK: Yeah

YP2: diagnosises,

JK: Hmm

YP2: but that is probably going to be a heavy task

YP1: What I will say is maybe not fully centralised, but more like a wide approach

YP2: {Yeah yeah

YP1: so, for example if that person has an inkling that they may have to be referred then they can be referred instead of going through the process of signing paperwork

YP2: {Yeah

YP1: and stuff like that because once the paperwork's done and stuff like that, I think if that person is being able to be referred once she’s still in the process so, for example, you've got a autism diagnosis and you've just got it but you've also maybe got an inkling of maybe like dyslexia or stuff

YP2: {yeah

YP1: other stuff like that, then that service can be referred to to that other clinician

JK: {Yeah yeah

YP1: And stuff like that and I think that might be easier on that young person instead

YP2: {Yeah

JK: {Mmm

YP1: of going through two types of referrals but one, like for example, maybe at start of school and one when you're in university, when it doesn't really

JK: {Mmm

YP1: make sense you've gone throughout your life and thinking this is what's wrong with me to be then be told there’s more issues and you're thinking and it stresses young people

YP2: {Yeah

YP1: stresses you out and

JK: Right okay

YP2: Could you go with then one service, but with multiple different departments?

YP1: That's what I were

JK: {Right okay

YP2: I think that is probably a thing

YP4: I think they just need to like, if you’ve known, like if you're going through like to get, like, a st whatever it's called now, like I know them as statements

YP2: Yeah

YP4: there should be, like just one

YP3: {EHCP

YP4: Yeah, okay,

JK: Oh right

YP4: like one simple one anyone can like, not everyone, but do you know like different services for like autism em people who copes with autism, people who copes with dyslexia and that can see it

YP2: Yeah

YP4: and then they can like work around that so then so then they might say like autism might pick up a few what don't seem like autism but dyslexia can like say well actually that does fit with us more

YP2: Mm

YP4: for that person

YP1: Hm

YP4: So then like you can just be like it's one application, but any services can see it

JK: Hmm

YP4: And then

YP2: and they're transparent with each other as well,

JK: {Yeah

YP2: so then they can, like, send information to like different departments saying, “Oh eh

YP4: “Mr Bob”

YP2: [laughs] yeah something like that

YP3: So like for them to be able to like work together

JK: Yes

YP3: makes sense but also like there’s the separate departments but for the departments to actually work together because it’s like if you go to say like you go to the doctors you’ve always got to like reiterate what you’ve told them in past because they don’t read your medical history

JK: Right

YP4: But it's like kind of one of them

JK: Yeah

YP3: for the other services to read like previous issues across from them previous issues a couple of more issues

JK: Yeah

YP3: and especially like the female sides because they’re very good at masking stuff so

JK: Yes

YP3: Diagnosises are is start for that, then add on the difficulties finding the extra issues after what don't really get support till adulthood but then when you’re in adulthood it’s harder cos waiting lists are twice as long, like for an ADHD diagnosis as an adult you’ve got to pay for it

JK: Right

YP3: to get it in a like reasonable time so it

JK: I feel like we talk all day this is fascinating isn’t it

YP2: Yeah

YP3: I could gie you a good life from that

YP2: [laughing]

JK: There’s so much to say and ask about

[laughing]

YP1: You’ll have to come back again [laughing]

JK: [laughing] Is there anything you want to put, so if we are going to meet again,

YP1: Yeah

JK: because we are going to meet with the educational psychologists and do you I mean do you, because you don’t have to but if you want to plan what you want to talk about with them then you can I’ve just written here things to ask and things to tell em I don’t know if you want to

YP2: Eh I've got one thing to ask

JK: Yeah

YP2: Em how would resources be like, if all different services that deal with different diagnosises eh centralised into one service for in different departments within that service. It's a very long question,

JK: It is!

YP4: {I’m just going to see if the heating’s still on

YP1: It’s important to ask that question I think

JK: Shall I say like how would serv how would resources be like if all different services regarding different diagnoses worked together?

YP2: Yeah,

YP1: yeah,

JK: Something like that

YP2: Yeah I probably simplify it like that

YP1: because I don't think they communicate between services.

YP2: Yeah

JK: Is there anything else you'd like to know about what educational psychologists do? It’s a good chance to

YP2: Yeah, there

JK: {I’m maybe particularly thinking about, sorry

YP3: {It’s not so much a question about what they do but it’s obviously like educational psychologists it’s even they’re focused on like say autism or something and then like the mental health side is a completely different bit so it’s like would there be a way for them to be like con, like, not fully conjoined but so there’s more

YP4: So a link to em

JK: Yeah

YP3: So there’s more like a link cos it you get like bounced through service to service and back again, like

JK: Yeah

YP3: they mentioned earlier but

JK: I think they would definitely be able to answer that question. Em, so a way for educational psychologists to work with mental health?

YP3: Yeah cos otherwise you’ve got to go through it separately

JK: Yeah

YP3: And you've got to say the same thing multiple times and that gets quite mentally draining

YP2: Yeah. Mhm.

JK: Okay

YP1: I think another question we can ask these, I know these psychologists will be like for everyone but how does eh people shape their services? So does young people's views get into it? Does thing, or if I say people, then we can see if they're going to touch on young people and see if that's going to be touched on or if they're just going to say, “Well, we've spoken to adults we've spoken to our senior members and NHS”

JK: Okay, so how do people shape their services,

YP1: Yeah

JK: so how do people shape educational psychologists’ services?

YP1: Yeah and then if we don't hear youth and we can question them and say why is that not a thing?

YP2: Yeah

YP3: Because there’s a lot of parent, well, parent groups at the minute rather than young people’s groups and a lot of people don’t listen to the younger end as much because it's we're not it’s like we’re not seen as, although you've got the actual experience

JK: Mm

YP3: they’d rather go round that to the people what’s viewed their experience

JK: Okay

YP3: but might be more socially aware or summit but so not actually the young people that’s got a lot to say and the capability to say it but the opportunities just like that bit harder

JK: Mm

YP3: And a lot of the time it’s the adults seem to talk for you but, I mean it’s not as bad now but

JK: So what would you want to te, what’s important to you to tell the educational psychologists because it’s an opportunity for you to tell them about what you do as well

YP4: that we have the right to be listened to, because it's easy to talk to our parents and that but at the end of the day, we're the one going through it,

JK: Yeah

YP4: So why should they take what our parents say and not involve us

JK: Yeah

YP4: because it's not really a person-centred approach

JK: Yep, okay

YP1: I think what we want to tell them is about the work we have done and how we’ve actually helped shape the services in [town name]

JK: Yeah

YP2: Yeah

YP3: And how we want to do it further

YP1: and how we want to, yeah, do it further into that section as well, because I think once we start working together, I think we'll get the bigger picture on what is the issues in the services? Because I don't think at the moment the the like experience we’ve had and I think a couple of different experiences for like young people from this group has had and I think if we tell them that we want to work together, they can start seeing our side of the picture and start imagining “well this process what we've done for years and years and we’ve never wanted to change it. Oh we might have to change it now” because it's moving on with the times but it's also about making sure that they adapt to the person and the needs of that person who's getting that

YP3: equity rather than equality

JK: Say that again

YP3: It’s like going on like equity rather than equality

JK: Okay

YP3: Because like with the equality, a lot of it seem, like so when people say oh autism is a spectrum and something daft it’s

JK: Yeah

YP3: A lot of times I kind of see it as just

(COUGHING INTERRUPTION)

JK: Guys we’ve had such a fascinating conversation I feel like I'm cutting you short but I'm just conscious that you’ve got other things to do today I don’t want to go over my time too much, so I'm going to kind of draw us to a close there but if you have ideas, or if there's more that you think should be on this or things you want to ask or things you want to tell them just make a little note try and remember and bring it to the next group, but em

YP3: transitional support for adult services

JK: Oh yes is that in things to tell or the things to ask?

YP3: Both

YP1: I think

YP3: We need like to ask but also tell them to do that shit

YP4: Yeah [laughing]

JK: So I've asked the the educational psychologists if they’d be willing to come and meet you, face to face rather than doing it online which is what we’d originally planned. So there’s three of them and two have said that they definitely can and I’m just waiting to hear back from the third

YP3: Are we allowed to know their names? Just, are they like [*town name*] educational psychologists?

JK: {I tell you what, they’re all, they’re all, yeah I should have told you that, they’re all from [*town name*], they’re all from this area

YP1: Yeah

JK: Em, so they all work in the schools in this area and college sometimes as well, so em

YP3: Start with [*EP name*] wherever he is

JK: Okay was that the one that you had, okay

YP3: Oh he were the one who diagnosed us so, he were alright but he were a bit, [?]

JK: So is it, the thing about I want to em yeah, I should turn this off now

YP2: Yeah

# Appendix Q: Joint Focus Group Transcript

JK: Facilitator (me)

YP1: Youth person 1

YP2: Youth person 2

YP3: Youth person 3

YP4: Youth person 4

EP2: Educational psychologist 2

EP3: Educational psychologist 3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| { | Overlap in conversational turns indicated by left hand bracket |
| [?text] | Unclear speech (where transcription may be inaccurate) |
| [?] | Small segment of inaudible text |
| [????] | Longer segment of inaudible text |
| [laugh] | Information on non-linguistic features, like laughing |
| ... | Long pause (longer than 4 seconds) |
| [*italicised text*] | Text which has been changed to ensure anonymity |
| (INTERRUPTION) | Interruption (where transcript stopped/started) |
| (…SECTION REMOVED…) | Small section of text removed to protect confidentiality of participant |

(TRANSCRIPT STARTED FOLLOWING ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY)

JK: Em so, yeah, I'm just hoping I'm hoping this is going to be a conversation as much as anything and like I said, my rough plan is that we’ll kind of have three bits to it we can tell each other about what we do em ask questions and then have a conversation about the potential for for the future. Um, do you know what I brought with me I printed off em do you remember we in the because the group that we did with the educational psychologists we did it on it was like an online

EP2: thank you

JK: group we did it through a video call

EP3: Ah

YP3: [?]

JK: and have you ever used

EP2: Shall I pass them round?

JK: well

EP2: Or are they just?

JK: well, these are I've got ones that are the notes from your discussion.

EP2: Yes okay

JK: Um that was for [*participant name*] em so we did have you ever used jamboards before?

YP2: Yeah

YP4: Yeah

JK: Yeah, oh great so I don't

YP3: [?]

YP4: Yeah

YP3: Yeah

JK: So when we were talking, we made some notes, and I just printed that off

EP2: Hmm

JK: because I thought that was the easiest way for us to remember that and do you remember when we when we met, we actually had flip chart but I was really aware that my handwriting was really messy so I’ve actually, what I did

YP3: it was shocking

JK: was I typed it out just to just to remind us what we talked about as well

YP2: Yeah

JK: So the yellow bits were more kind of like em things that you were making a note that you wanted to talk tell the educational psychologists about tell em [*participant* *names*] about and em the blue ones were more like questions that you might want to ask as well. I think you've got kind of pink pink ones at the end

EP2: Hmm

JK: as well, which were kind of things about kind of ideas that you had about how we could potentially work together I'm not sure we got that far with our conversation so ours were the for the young people it was just grouped into yellow and blue. So I'm going to try and stop talking actually

[laughing]

JK: because I’ve talked for ages em because I'm interested to hear what you’ve got to say. So I wondered if anybody would like to kind of, em, eh get us started really kind of anything they'd like to start feeding back to the other group something you think would be really interesting to tell the educational psychologists about your work so the young people could tell the educational psychologists about your work or the EPs. I’m going to use EPs as a shorthand for educational psychologists because it’s a really long expression if that's okay so I’m going to say EPs. Whether the EPs could tell young people I’m going to hand it over to you a little bit.

EP2: [big breath out]

YP1: I’ll go first

YP3: Go on ging

[laughing]

YP1: So as [*group name*] we’ve been working on like loads of resources eh working with decision makers and, eh so for example, recently we've been collecting a lot of information about young people's services and how they want it to be to have an input in them services but from the start, instead of being asked right at the end of the service or when the service is being commissioned so it's about making sure that we've been talking about stuff what we want to see in the service eh what we want to see in this SEND strategies so we’ve been looking at strategies and how we can make sure that they put the young people first. So, for example, eh making sure that actually when that strategy is there that the person is able to understand oh this is about bullying this is what I can fetch it up to a school or a school understands what that said person needs and things so we've been feeding back and making sure we've been changed and stuff like that

EP3: Ah

EP2: Okay

YP2: Sorry yeah I were gonna input on the recent work that we've done,

EP3: Mmm

YP2: which is called, eh, Preparing for Adulthood.

JK: Hmm

YP2: So it's from like 0 to 25 years of age, eh and it goes through all the developments of like eh where they expect people to be at, like, a certain age.

EP3: [?]

YP2: It just as a generalisation.

EP2: Yeah

YP2: But a lot of us, eh, pointed out key areas on what should be targeted on em trying to improve eh like independent living, eh, going on like and they're given a choice, basically, on what

JK: Yeah

YP2: they want to do.

EP3: [?]

YP2: Em, so we consolidated a lot of the em work from like young people across [*town*]

JK: Oh wow

YP2: and then put it as a presentation towards eh, a board meeting with the council.

JK: Cool

EP3: Wow

YP1: Yeah

YP2: Yeah, eh yeah and basically then eh presenting those eh points that young people have made to then make into the actual, eh,

JK: Okay

YP2: strategy itself.

EP2: Oh wow okay. And in terms of the [*group name*] there's obviously you four but how many of you are there in the [*group name*]?

YP4: Well

EP2: Is there a lot of you?

YP4: Em like there’s us four then, like, whoever’s out there as well.

EP2: Oh okay,

YP4: so like we've got

YP3: I’m doing the maths on it

YP1: So technically, how it first started was it were like two people per like

YP4: youth club

YP1: youth club

EP3: Ah right

YP1: And now that's technically dropped off at the moment but they are trying to recruit more young people

EP2: Okay

YP1: to take part in it because it's best to get a wider view of young people

EP2: Mmm

YP1: than it is to get a smaller sample

EP2: Yeah

YP1: to inform decision makers. So they are working on it and they are thinking about could there be another way to run it maybe having additional days or maybe in schools so, for example, going into schools and speaking to people who won't be able to get into [*town name*] because maybe they can't afford a bus fare they might not be able to get a car there or anything like that so there is a lot of work still going in schools

EP3: Mmm

YP1: and technically, we probably will never see em or never meet him, but it's still getting feedback

EP2: {Yeah

YP1: to decision makers and still being collected as a whole.

EP2: Yeah

YP3: Fourteen

EP2: Fourteen participants

JK: That was nice, a little bit of maths happening in the background there

[laughing]

EP2: Okay and so is that how you got all the views for the Preparation for Adulthood, you know, through going into schools and

YP4: Em well, me and another mem

YP3: {Consultating ay for a lot of it

EP2: Okay

YP4: And me and another member from the [*group name*] went to like different groups like we went to, like, a juniors, a seniors and two other well one other group and got their voices who like different colours so like red was what were not working and amber were no then it was green that were working and then amber for like

YP3: {suggestions

YP4: Yeah suggestions of how it could be better and that

EP2: Okay so was that just through, like, conversations just chats

YP4: Yeah

YP2: {Yeah

YP4: And like with workers as well.

EP2?: Yeah

YP4: So like the workers were like at the table and they would discuss it with the young people.

EP2: Okay

EP3: Very good

EP2: Yeah

EP3: Do you all take on slightly different projects then like things that or are they all I mean I know they all go towards a

YP2: Yeah

EP3: I haven’t said that very well sorry but it sounds

YP3: I’d say some of us have

EP3: like you've got maybe doing slightly different things

YP3: Some of us are and some of us have like different like we do work together with stuff but some of us have more focus on it like us three have been doing stuff with [*organisation name*] as well

EP2: Okay

YP3: it’s the mental health service in town. He does a lot of transport stuff that we’ve obviously just left him to publicise his stuff in [*bus station name*]

JK: we talked a bit about that last time

YP2: And then I got involved with the eh peer researchers.

JK: Ah right okay do you want to tell us about that that sounds interesting

YP2: So peer researchers it’s basically, eh, we’re wanting to find out on eh what's se services provide in their local offer page around eh the whole of Yorkshire.

EP2: Okay

JK: Wow

YP2: So this is like, more regionalist.

EP2: Yeah

YP2: Em, and I presented my findings eh through I’m trying to remember the name of the actual eh conference,

JK: Don’t worry

YP2: but em so we'll find out about, like, all em, how they present their local offer

JK: Mmm

YP2: eh is it ease of access and what can be improved

JK: Okay

YP2: with their website.

EP2: Mmhmm

YP2: And then I'll be looking into further to do with, eh, the actual services that are on the local offer

EP3: Yeah

YP2: and trying to get like views from like em people with disabilities and their families.

JK: Mm

YP2: and get their views on how services work. And if it's up to standard, really,

EP2: Yeah

YP2: and we’d also be talking to the services as well and saying em what they think should be improved.

JK: Hmm

YP2: and how can they better engage with young people

JK: Certainly busy

YP2: Yeah

EP3: You are busy

JK: a lot a lot of different things going on

EP3: at so many different levels as well to be working regionally and things it’s quite exciting

JK: Yeah yeah. I know that I'm just kind of questioning because I know that you've all got lots of things that you want to say and ask and it’s just finding the right kind of structure for us isn’t it I mean, would you like to hear a little bit from the

YP1: Yeah

YP2: Yeah

JK: EPs as well about what you would you like to talk a little bit about what you do?

EP2: Yeah gosh what do we do?

JK: I know it’s hard it’s hard to know where to start isn’t it

EP3: [laughing]

EP2: Yes so we obviously work with children from 0 to 25 em and yeah, we we work at different levels as well so we might be working sort of with an individual child that we might be working with the adults around the child, em or it might be sort of more at a whole school level em so different levels like that

EP3: Mmm

EP2: em yeah and we could be doing sort of supporting about a whole whole host of different things really, em different sort of areas of need, em, and working, getting the young person's voice or child and young person's voice themselves and and how they're finding school and the situation and really trying to sort of draw out the strengths and what's working well in a situation to try and build and sort of improve

EP3: Mmm

EP2: maybe some of the things that a little bit stuck or a little bit tricky at the moment, I think

JK: Yeah

EP2: Yeah

EP3: I think some of it's about advocating for that young person because although we’re kind of employed by the local authority our role is always to think about that young person, not necessarily, obviously we do think about the other people that are working with them, but they’re I suppose our priority in terms of the views that people have got. Em

EP2: Yeah

EP3: em so it's always coming back to that in a way sort of advocating what they want and trying to get that across to other people I think sometimes as well

EP2: Yeah because I think sometimes as well when there are a lot of people involved, a lot of adults, all with different views, the child or the young person's voice in the middle can sometimes be a bit lost. So I guess it’s we need to try and make sure that that’s heard and built upon I think as well

JK: Mmm. I’m just kind of looking at our notes because one of the things that em we said as EPs talking about our kind of values and principles and we're talking about advocating and, you know, making sure that we're always making sure that the child is at the centre and there’s this other kind of bit that we've made a note about as well about coproduction and coplanning I don’t know if you want to talk about that or a little bit?

EP2: Yeah so [laughing], em yeah, coproduction could be, em, it could look quite different, depending on the situation or perhaps the age of the child or if the child wants to be involved and actually attend the coproduction meeting perhaps themselves em, but, yes, it's it’s very much working together em listening to each other, sharing views together to then sort of, em, yeah, move forwards and and to try and plan some next steps together, I guess. Yeah. [*participant name*] is there anything to add about coproduction?

EP3: Not that I can think of off the top of my head yeah it is trying to bring everyone together so that everyone is involved in that

EP2: Yeah, and I guess it's through sort of having those conversations together about what you're going to do next hopefully then people are more invested because they're they’re sort of being involved in that development of the next steps.

EP3: Hmm

EP2: And so then they’re hopefully more likely to put those things in place

JK: Any questions or thoughts about what we’re speaking about, em even even if it's like, oh not quite sure what you mean by that, or I didn't know you did that, or I wonder if you do this, or, from both sides actually

YP3: I mean I didn’t know services went up to 25. That's when I had educational psychologist it finished at 18

EP2: Okay, yeah

YP3: then they had to put you to adult services, but my mum told them not to she just didn’t think I’d do owt after school so

JK: Mmm

EP2: Yeah it’s if they have em, yeah, if they've got an education health and care plan up until the age of 25 or if they’re in further education I think I believe

JK: Yeah yeah

YP2: Yeah

EP3: Yeah

EP2: I think the changes came, I think, through the code of practice.

JK: Yeah, so I remember last time we put there was a little bit where we talked about statements and somebody said, eh, whatever that is we talked about statements and something said “Oh whatever it’s called now”.

JK: so what we used to call

YP3: {Oh yeah

JK: statements is an education health and care plan

EP2: yeah

JK: and I think around the time when they changed the name of that, I think that's maybe when

EP2: Mm mmhmm

JK: we start EPs

EP3: {Yeah

JK: started working beyond 18

EP2: Yeah

JK: up to 25 so it has been a change around that

EP3: and I think we're still developing that a little bit as well in that so still most of my work is with schools,

EP2: Mmhmm

EP3: and that tends to be young people under 16 but I think that’s because we're still trying to get our way into colleges a little bit

YP2: Mm

EP3: Or em

EP2: Yeah

EP3: Yeah

YP4: I didn't know that they exist.

EP3: I think that’s the

JK: You didn’t know that they existed okay,

EP2: yeah

JK: yeah, so there's probably quite a lot to learn and talk about isn’t there?

YP2: I think a lot of services in terms of em like going up to 25 don't really advertise that much in terms of em being able to give that young person eh, the ability to be able to go into like a voice network or,

EP3: Yeah

YP2: em even find like just activities

JK: Mm

EP2: Mmhmm

YP3: you've got to be referred and all to it

YP2: Yeah,

YP3: I think is it from you that we've got to be referred to that [?] psychologists?

EP2: Em, yy in terms of accessing our support

YP3: like the targeted youth support and stuff I think

YP4: [?]

YP3: for like [*group name*] thing on a Monday and Thursday you’ve got to have a referral now to go to it

YP4: Yeah but I don't think it's from like psychologists I think it’s

YP2: Mm

EP2: Yeah I don’t

JK: Yeah, I know yeah sorry

EP2: No I I I don't think that's I’ve never referred anyone to sort of those sorts of things.

YP1: It’s a different system from what I I understand

YP3: Seem to get referred to it somehow but I think it’s [?] not heard about cos of the referral

YP1: Mm

EP2: Yeah, I think I'm finding that tricky as well because I'm new to [*town name*] there's an awful lot of systems for for me to get my head around and what's actually out there, you know, I think and and I think that's yeah, it's tricky, I guess when you're seeking support to know what's available, I think perhaps as well,

JK: mhmm

YP1: what I will say and some people might find it strange and some people might not find it strange is although it goes up to 25 the EHC plan if you go to university technically it’s a completely different system

JK: mm

EP2: yeah

YP1: what you go on. So if you went to university and then came back to college it’s

EP3: yeah

YP1: just a completely different system,

EP2: yeah

YP1: so it seems a bit disjointed if you're going to put the EHC plan upto 25 and then have the university thing but that's because of how it's funded and everything so

YP3: you've got to go for an interview thing at uni wi disability services to get

YP1: yeah

YP3: extra student loan for it

JK: yeah

EP3: yeah

YP3: and get like your laptop and stuff and

EP2: yeah

JK: mm

YP3: it's like you’ve got to get re diagnosed when you go to uni

JK: Mm okay so a completely different thing

YP1: It is yeah. From from my case, when I went to university I got extra support compared to what I got in college

EP3?: Mm

YP1: but then again, when I went to school I got

YP3: [?] get

YP1: I got basically hardly nothing and then we did it in college and then we did it in thing so it were like just completely different changes every time it went up instead of a constant check up every year as the EHCP

YP3: {They were more bothered about OFSTED

YP1: it were more like we technically don't have the funding for that and then apparently, college had the funding to do certain stuff and then university said “well we could do this” and that and it were basically some people were saying it were due to funding some people were saying it weren't,

EP3: Hm

YP1: eh and I think if people are being told it's due to funding then I think they’d be worried about what they can get in the future

YP3: I mean [?] all the money on new buildings

YP1: to do with like base needs and looking at how to restructure, how to how to continue to see that person progress, I think what needs to be changed,

JK: Mmm

YP1: and instead of like having like one in school school every year and then apparently it changes in college, the question should be, “Why is it changed in college?”

YP3: Mm

YP1: is it something to do with me being changed? Is it my fault?

EP2: Mmm

YP1: Is it the school’s fault? Is it thing? And it's no one's fault [?] it's just how the system is at the moment.

YP3: It's like at school you have meeting every I used to have it with [*name*]

YP1: Yeah

YP3: and then a psychologist that [*name*] whatever he were, he were a pain in butt. Well it’s like I used to have that every year so it's not like they're not getting up to date stuff then

JK: Mmm

YP3: it's like you've got to go through re diagnosis explaining all your past traumas and stuff again

JK: Mmm

YP3: every time you go somewhere else in education system

JK: Mmhmm

YP3: So

EP2: That doesn't seem fair that you have to almost yeah retell again and again

YP3: Yeah, which is really annoying

YP4: I never had that I I always had support what I needed through school from primary and that

YP3: I went to [*school name*] though totally different ball game.

YP2: Yes, well, I went to university all my support just dropped completely. I didn't get any, eh, form of support except for the em what do they call it now when they have you have someone who you can refer to?

YP1: scribe

YP2: em

YP4: like a mentor or?

YP2: it’s like a mentor thing but it's throughout all uni

YP3: Maybe a mentor

JK: Not sure actually yeah

YP2: and eh that was the only person that I were able to like refer to if I had any struggles

JK: Mm

YP2: luckily he actually worked with people with disabilities beforehand

JK: Oh okay

YP2: so he knew a lot to do with em how to handle certain situations and how to basically keep the confidence in in the person up because uni can really drag you down sometimes

EP3: oh

YP2: Yeah

JK: Yeah, yeah, so that was a positive a positive experience?

YP2: Yeah, but the thing is, is that eh not if people didn't have that in place

JK: Yeah so making the transition up into

YP2: Yeah

JK: from that from there to there

YP2: And it's not easy to get in touch with services, either.

JK: No

YP2: So

YP3: There's a lot of students as well what don’t actually tell the universities that they’ve got a disability because they don't want the differential treatment so it's but then if they'll go so long without it and then when it gets to the point that I think they do still need it,

JK: mm

YP3: and then want to re access it you've got to go through everything all again.

JK: mm

YP3: And that's like a waiting list, for I don't know not as long as the mental health one but

JK: It's quite an interesting topic isn't about the kind of transition from kind of school and college education up into university. I don’t know if you two if the EPs have thoughts or responses to that in terms of your role or em

EP2: I'm not sure how much EPs have been involved with that and I guess that that's sounding like, you know, a bit of a barrier perhaps or you know, and but, yeah, it's not something I've come across or I've heard other EPs in my role sort of being part of supporting that transition but, I mean, it's it’s a massive transition for for all young people that, you know, especially sort of supporting, having to retell certain things and it it it sounds like it could be something EPs perhaps should be

EP3: Hmm

EP2: part of somehow

YP3: You’d think they would

YP2: Yeah

YP3: because as soon as you get your diagnosis you’re seeing you know EP things

EP2: Mm

JK: Mmhmm

YP3: so you’d think they would because, like, you’ve got all information, you have it all in your little, I mean say little, your big stack of files and all that so it's not like they can't just transfer the information across.

EP2: Mmm yeah

YP3: I mean if you saw like doctors or owt, they don't read your history,

JK: Mm, no

EP3: I wonder if it's about who is holding that sometimes because it might be, I suppose, because some young people that I meet I only ever get to meet once unfortunately, and then, I say unfortunately, because I really enjoyed spending time with them and I feel a bit sad [laughing] but but em I suppose yeah if I was maybe working with someone and they were getting an education health and care plan, then em then there’s their school kind of take that over and do the yearly reviews with them, and they might not involve me in that again so I s em

YP1: It's a very disjunctive approach I think

YP3: Mm

YP2: Yeah

YP3: Schools want to have all the thingy so it makes them more like they’re doing summat and it’s like the schools can't get pointed out the flaws with the SEND stuff if they know the educational psychologists there

JK: Mmm okay

EP2: Is there something about yeah whose whose role is it to sort of support that transition?

JK: Yes yeah

EP2: Em to make sure all that information is passed on,

YP2: The only, I have actually encountered a problem with, like, passing of information.

JK: Mm

YP2: Em, because GDPR actually blocked me from getting support

EP2: Right

YP2: and I was working with the in a company I'm not going to mention the company. Em, but they said because em I was going through a really bad time with mental health

EP2: Uh huh

YP2: that em, I could not eh I can only call it, call them myself like the crisis team

JK: Oh right

YP2: but not them for me

EP3: Right

YP2: even though I was in a really bad mental state and I was in no state to even call

JK: Mmm

EP2: Mmm

JK: So you felt that that was kind of blocking the GDPR stuff was blocking?

YP2: Yeah, and I found, like, multiple situations where even if it is like for a young person that it will block them from getting certain support

JK: Hmm

YP2: throughout their life, and it's something that needs to be looked at.

JK: Hmm that’s interesting

YP2: but it's a national thing that which is very different from a local perspective

YP3: Not that crisis team do owt anyway cup of tea and a bath

[laughing]

EP2: I guess as well you you the other thing to think about, you know, this sort of passing of information from setting to setting and sort of different education stages, some young people might not want, you know, things that

JK: Hmm

EP2: happen to them or, em you know, their school experiences onto their new setting you know, some might some might not want that I guess, as more of a fresh start or

JK: Mm

EP2: things like that and I guess that was what what you were saying about em sort of not wanting that differential treatment and things like that

EP3: Mmm

YP3: I think a lot of it is with all of that stuff involves around like, past discriminations by, like, education services

EP2: Mmhmm

YP3: like beside the young people because like other kids that's a totally different matter, but a lot of it with me were at school they kept telling me I were unteachable and stuff, but and my one of my science teachers told me to get me and my disease out of his classroom, because they just received the autism diagnosis. So it's like, after that you think is that that's that's what the problem is

EP2: Yeah

YP3: so when you go to uni you didn't tell them about it

EP2: Yeah

YP3: to start with and you’re not getting your support

JK: Mmm

EP2: Seems like a catch 22 seeing it’s like a balance, isn't it?

YP3: Yeah

EP2: Yeah yeah how much do you want to share? How much do I need to share?

YP3: Like can that kind of be sent for us?

YP2: It actually comes to one of our questions

JK: Go on then yeah are you having [?]

YP2: Yeah em so what would resources be like if all different services regarding different diagnosises worked together?

JK: Do you want to kind of? So I can remember what we were talking about when we wrote that down can you remember the conversation because it might be useful to kind of explain it a little bit em

YP2: So, em, we’ve noticed a thing on, like, passing on to, like, a different team for diagnosing, diagnosing certain conditions. So if you were referred for autism and you are on the waiting list for, like, quite quite a long time. Eh, and then you get to that diagnosis thing only for them to say, eh, we don't think you have got autism, but we we should refer you to another diagnosis team like ADHD or something quite similar. Then you put on another waiting list where it's then waiting even longer to get any form of support.

EP3: it’s frustrating isn’t it

EP2: Yeah very frustrating

YP2: which is why I'm always thinking, is it possible to combine those services together? So it's in one centralised service?

JK: {I think I remember, sorry

YP2: But that, yes sorry go on,

JK: No you go on, go on

YP2: eh, but the only problem is, is then you've got logistics reasons, eh reasons which I can understand

JK: Were you going to say something?

YP1: Yeah, I think I remember this conversation and I pointed out I think if the information were passed on quicker and like, because I don't know how it works and maybe it already happens but, for example, that person who you've seen all that information gets passed on to that other person and they may have a meeting, and then they might say “oh this meets the definition” so maybe it can be diagnosed quicker instead of having a system where you get referred, you probably won't speak to someone if someone technically might know what they’re doing and consult with that other EHC people educational psychologist or thing to get their views maybe it can be run differently?

JK: Yeah so, and I remember when we were talking about this that you felt this was a really relevant thing to bring to the educational psychologists you felt that was something that you'd like that was something, so we wrote down I don't know if you've got kind of a, any thoughts on that it’s not necessarily answering the question, but kind of thoughts or responses to that, or?

EP3: I can understand why you wouldn't want to end up on two lots of waiting lists that it's not practical is it it's em really frustrating to then be waiting

YP3: {And by the time you’ve got your diagnosis it’s like you've passed the point of needing that support you need even more deeper support because you’ve not had the any support in between

EP3: makes you feel like no one's done anything in that time.

YP3: It's like with mental health service you put on you like get in contact to be referred to them and then you’re put on a waiting list like I’ve been waiting t like the doctors have referred me to Crisis Team and I’ve still not heard from them and like four or five weeks, so it’s like you could your mental health or whatever could deteriorate between then and then you’re past the point of then

EP2: I'm just wondering if and again, I really don't know if this would be the case but if we're combining the waiting lists, would it make that waiting list even longer? I guess just due to the sheer amount of people on this one combined waiting list, I don't know if that makes sense?

YP2: I think what I meant about with it being run centrally is that those teams, the separate teams that work on like specific

EP2: Yeah

YP2: diagnosises actually communicate and work together

EP2: together yeah

YP2: on things so you still have the multiple waiting lists to, like keep that waiting down

EP2: Yeah

YP2: but then when it actually comes to, like getting the diagnosis, but they're in the wrong section for that diagnosis, then, eh, that EP can then like get in touch with another one

EP3: put them on top of the queue almost on a because they’ve waited their turn if that makes sense but in a different

EP2: yeah

YP2: But then they can still get that diagnosis quite quickly without having to wait another waiting list

EP2: Yeah yeah

YP2: to get through

EP2: I guess it sounds like it comes back to that communication again sort of between between professionals by the sounds of it and a little bit to help support that perhaps as well

EP3: I think some of its probably I'm finding a little bit harder because I think a lot of those processes sit and em in the in the NHS,

YP2: Yep

YP3: [?]

EP3: Side of it and sometimes yeah, sometimes maybe our communication with the NHS isn’t always as strong as it should be. I think when they kind of brought in education, health and care it was because they wanted education, health and care to be working together but I feel quite distanced

JK: {Hmm

EP2: {Hmm

EP3: from from those processes

YP2: Probably

EP3: actually if I’m completely honest

JK: Yeah

YP2: that is probably why we're getting that eh problem with the waiting list being

JK: Hmm

YP2: too clogged up

YP3: Covid’s not helped them either

JK: No it hasn’t

YP3: it's just like all the other NHS services because like they’ve I've been on a waiting list for a skin cancer assessment but obviously Covid has been more important than that

JK: Mmm

YP3: but it’s like there’s more people dying from other stuff rather than Covid.

JK: Mmm

YP3: Same with [?] like there's more kids are struggling more

JK: Mm

YP3: with like the special needs than they are with Covid and it’s like as long as they've got measures in place and it's like they're aware that it’s a risk to go in

JK: Mm

YP3: and like shouldn't really affect it much. But it’s like when you have to have appointments over like zoom and stuff

JK: Mm

YP3: it's like because you can't really talk the same to someone on Zoom

JK: So you feel Covid’s really kind of interrupted that again, and again it’s that kind of link or not link between health and education

YP3: It’s one of them you know, everyone needs to be safe, especially them working in NHS but the same time is it how much more of a priority is that of the young peoples’ needs like

JK: Mm

YP3: especially for like autistic and stuff because their routine’s been changed because they’re out of school and they’re isolating and stuff, they ain’t got the constant routine. Parents aren't getting the break they need and it’s

JK: there’s a lot going on isn’t there? Yeah. I’m wondering if there's anything else off your em your notes that you made last time any questions that you wanted to make sure you asked em

YP1: Yeah so this question what I've got is yeah, this is probably more or in the NHS bosses, I would say, how do people help shape your services so

EP3: In terms of how we're working?

YP1: Yeah

EP3: That's a really good question.

EP2: Yeah yeah

YP3: Like is there a lot of young people voice and stuff in it?

EP2: I guess that there have been quite recent significant changes in our service in terms of sort of this academic year em, and I'm wondering if young person voice was included in that? I wasn't yeah but there was quite some significant changes and I know it's sort of em in discussions with lots of people in [*town name*] in the local authority and high up in sort of children's services but yeah, it would be interesting to know if if young person’s voices were captured within those sort of big decisions em in terms of how we operate,

JK: So do you feel that you you you don’t kind of you're not quite sure maybe?

EP2: Yeah, I'm not I'm not sure I guess partly I wasn't here

JK: Yeah

EP2: and, yeah, I'm aware that sort of our service is being shaped by decisions made higher above our service and within the LA but how it's how young people's voices are included within that I'm not sure em

EP3: Mmm yeah can't say I’m sure from that [?] I suppose when it comes to individual work em got a little bit more

EP2: Mm

EP3: control maybe over what that looks like with the young person

JK: Mmm

EP2: Yeah

EP3: but in terms of how they’re commissioned or because often referrals to us are kind of made well they’re not really referrals but we meet with schools and we think about which young people might I sup it might be helpful for us to have involvement em and, yeah, I am aware even just saying that that doesn't really give much opportunity for young people to be to be

EP2: yeah

EP3: included in whether they want that involvement or to ask for it em, and I know young people can request our involvement but eh I've not actually had that in the entire time I've been practising

JK: [short out breath]

EP3: and maybe that is because they don't know about us they also may just not want us [laughing] which is fair

EP2: yeah

EP3: but I wonder whether yeah, young people would know that we exist or how to

EP2: Yeah

JK: I wonder if that leads us on quite naturally, to the kind of last bit I hope I’m not interrupting did you want to respond to that [*name*] you had a little,

YP1: No

JK: look, no. Em kind of the last bit about em thinking about how you know could you imagine our say, EPs educational psychologists and your group, for instance working together, what would that look like? Em, and the question’s to you guys to the educational psychologists as well em I wonder if we could think about that a little bit together as a group and I wonder em where the kind of opportunities might be the kind of things you could imagine doing, or the things that you think might make that really difficult to do as well?

YP3: Can we not have like because like a sss like a educat SEND like board within like the specifically with educational psychologists cause it’s it needs to be young, like you need to get the voices of the young people or see if they’re currently accessing it

JK: Hmm

YP3: or has previously or like a bit of both

JK: Mmm

YP3: because it's like, you only get so much feedback from like other professionals and like OFSTED and all that stuff but like the main route to getting like your feedback for like development is the young people what’s going through it

JK: Mmm

EP3: Mm

EP2: Yeah

YP3: and like a way for them to work together,

JK: Mmm

YP3: because then they can also like, co work or like half of them and like say other different like voice groups

JK: Mm okay, a bit like what you were describing earlier, when you're thinking about like preparing for adulthood so there might be a small group of young people but they might like pull in or gather views from other places. Is that what you mean? So, so

YP3: Simply yeah. So like what we've got here, but like eh one in educational psychology, like

JK: Mmm

YP3: wi NHS because I know years ago I used to see educational psychologists they tried to put summat together it only went one or two weeks. There were only me and one other lass

JK: Ah right

YP3: and this were when I first diagnosed, and I like I may have worded something a bit wrong, so she smacked me one and I just stopped

JK: Ah okay

YP3: cause she were in foster care, I were only like nine or 10 at the time and I’d just started watching Tracy Beaker so I just like, “Oh, you’re like Tracy Beaker then” like not meaning it offensively or owt but obviously

JK: Mmm

YP3: being with another autistic person who also can take things the wrong way

JK: Okay, so she responded to that?

YP3: Yeah

JK: So that was that was the end of that [laughing]

YP3: So I only lasted, like, two weeks and, like, I mean she were a bit up her own butt anyway

JK: Okay. But that was an attempt to that was somebody trying to do something like that then was it?

YP3: Yeah, but I don't think it got right far,

JK: okay

YP3: but I don't think they’d really had much experience wi it whereas now we've got like obviously got [*youth network name*] so it's like the ones who’ll want to do it like the staff on educational psychologist like can get like trained up in that aspect

JK: Mmm

YP3: because it's one thing like wi a job talking to kids and doing all other stuff, like all other important stuff you do

JK: Mm

YP3: but like doing the voice side of it it's a different thing altogether

JK: Yes okay

YP3: like you've got to advocate on both but it's like different forms

JK: So you feel this group might be a good kind of support and opportunity and a way of supporting people to start to do that, to do that kind of work?

YP3: Yeah like getting younger kids involved

JK: Mm

YP3: who’s like going through the service at the minute

JK: Okay

YP3: because it's obviously changed since we were like in it

JK: Yeah probably

YP2: And not only that, it's like em, it's constant involvement because it constantly evolves. A lot of these, like, um, even just talking from like, the PFA thing is like, it's going to constantly evolve because there will always be new barriers that will present themselves in the future, which then we can then tackle with an update to the version of that eh system. But it's about like trying to be more involved in just constantly working at that eh specific thing

JK: Mmm

YP2: to basically improve it to a point where it's like it it's suitable for now

JK: mm so it's not like a it feels like what you're saying maybe is, if I’ve understood this right that it’s not a kind of a one off. It's not like gathering children and young people's voices in one-off

YP2: {yeah

JK: opportunities but it's like making sure that your, people are listening to that

YP2: {it’s a constant involvement yeah

JK: {evolution yeah, that’s interesting

YP1: Em I do, so you you’re employed by [*local authority name*]?

EP3: We are yeah

YP1: And that probably would be [*department name*]?

EP3: Yeah

YP1: And I think what we we need to do as young people and then as services is to start reaching out to these services to start having this conversation because I think at the moment we tend to do stuff but it tends to be the other way round where services comes to us and maybe the approach needs to be we start need to asking services “have you thought about this? Have you thought about that?” Because sometimes the services might be over stretched and probably won’t ever think about it but once you ask them, they might be saying “oh we've been wanting to do this we need we need to do this” because this is been in the government plan or the green plan or whatever’s come out recently and maybe something we need to start questioning us ourselves to ask staff members to start asking what has been going on could we get involved? And then it's about also trying to join up back. So like for example, every year there's something called [*event name*] which you might know of

YP3: sausage roll

YP1: So [*event name*] is like it's like big thing what comes up in November time where basically all services gather so like the main leaders and we speak to them leaders so they

JK: Okay

YP1: brought people from the [*department name*] safeboarding?

YP3: A lot of headteachers

YP2: I don’t think it’s that

YP1: Safeguarding board uh, yeah, I couldn't remember. Eh NHS comes in as well. So it's like a big meeting

YP3: {Mr sausage roll [laughing]

YP1: with, like, all the essential leaders and stuff like that. And like we've always put stuff forward to them and stuff like that, and they've always found it useful. And I think what we need to do for the next safe for the next [*event name]* meeting is start asking them, “what can we help you with?”. Because I think what we need to start thinking of, how can we best support you to actually shape that service? Did they know that we can help them? Maybe that we’re there to get involved and that we're willing to do stuff because I don't think people would think young people would do that

JK: Mmm

YP1: you've got the stereotype that young people don't want to be talking to people, you've got people who think they’re just sitting on the bus, setting fires and stuff like that, especially in [town name]

[laughing]

YP3: Half of them in half of the staff in [*event name*] meeting think we’re just talking shit or we don’t know what we’re on about they look at us like we’re stupid

EP2: Oh

YP1: And that we

YP3: [?]

YP1: I think what what probably what probably wants to happen is like, for example, maybe meeting three or four months with, like, major, major leaders so like the head of [*department name*] so the head of safeguarding the head of young people's services, the head of I think it's the people service of [*town name*]

EP3: You are working high up aren’t you!

YP1: So I think if we start talking to them and and if we start talking to them, not always, they're going to say yes to it and maybe we have to find a different way to try and get involved but I think you should just start talking to them and they want it, then I think that’ll definitely shape the service. And it will tick the criterias what [*town name*] needs to meet to meet a young person needs and government safeguarding and government rules to say that young people have been consulted and it's not just “Oh they've been consulted many years ago, let’s still tick it away”. So

EP3: Mhm

JK: You need to go really don’t know because you said you needed to finish at six

YP3: I were just playing wi it then but

JK: Say again

YP3: I were just playing wi it then

JK: Oh right

YP3: I were sending him a sausage roll

JK: I’m not sure what that means but I can imagine

YP3: From the [*event name*] meeting in it there were a sausage roll man

JK: Ah okay

YP3: that were a bit of a idiot. We sent him a nice letter of complaint.

JK: Ah okay,

YP3: as a [*group name*]

[laughing]

YP1: Oh, yeah

[laughing]

JK: I feel like it feels like the conversation could we might just have five more would you mind if we continued to talk after you've left or would you prefer it if we finished off? Because it’s we could do either. Or maybe I could ask the group. Does it feel like we

YP3: I don’t mind

YP2: I’m fine to continue

JK: Or do you feel it would be better to close it up now because [*participant name*] has to go or?

YP3: I don’t mind either way

JK: Maybe if we just had five more minutes em, or do you want to go now or do you want to?

YP3: Yeah I don’t want to get bollocked

JK: Yeah I know I know I was getting nervous that’s why I was nervous on your behalf

YP3: Because otherwise I don’t want to get done

JK: well, thanks ever so much for your contributions it’s been really lovely to see you again. And there will be opportunity I’ll say this again at the end but there will be opportunities to meet again just to look at the to eh because I’ll listen to all this write it all out and I'll have a think about maybe what we've learnt from it, I’ll bring it back and see what you guys think see if you agree with me

[YP3 leaves]

JK: I mean, I suppose I just wondered if if if, um, [*EP names*] if you just wanted if you had any thoughts about that about what the young people have been saying because it was quite interesting,

EP3: I thought it was lovely that you yeah, would sort of approach us as well and I feel a bit guilty to be honest maybe that we haven’t approached young people as well

EP2: Mmhmm

EP3: I I I I know that within [*department name*] there is kind of a youth participation officer role. Am I right?

YP1: Yep

EP2: Yes

EP3: and that that was a fairly recent in the scheme of things em kind of position or appointment. But I suppose part of that of us as teams is sort of finding out more about what she's doing at the moment, because I wonder whether she's having all whether there are discussions going on and then because obviously, but, uh, when I'm kind of working my role, I'd like to be able to support what young people want to see in our service

JK: Mm

EP3: and I kind of need to know what that is to be able to push for it on other people's behalfs but yeah

EP2: yeah,

EP3: and for us to be reaching out I think it’s em it’s a two way thing isn’t it

JK: Okay

YP2: Yeah

EP2: Yeah. Yeah, I think for me as well it was how you want that on like involvement to be ongoing, like over a long, long period of time is so important rather than it being a tick box

EP3: Yeah

JK: Yeah

YP2: Yeah

YP1: Yeah

EP2: em you know, and like you were saying about sort of em new barriers are coming up all the time and so we need to constantly be checking in with our service users and the young people themselves to say “Well, how are you finding this?” It needs to be that more ongoing involvement, I think, um, yeah, but definitely, like, [*EP name*] sort of the two way em relationship needs bringing more to the forefront I guess

JK: Okay

YP4: It would just be helpful if people wouldn’t just go off the grid between certain ages

JK: Mm

YP4: Like I gone off the grid between my 16th to 18th birthday like I had no thing and then two maybe a few weeks before I turned 18, I was like I was always at [*centre name*] on my days off from college. And it it does take your toll because you come for so long, like, luckily I were on a course what supported special educational needs, but you go for for too long, and then it's like, oh, there instead of like,

JK: So there’s that kind of sense that you want to be kind of remembered or people to kind of

YP4: Yeah like

JK: check in and know that you’re there

YP4: Yeah, because you like, go to college and that and then they like, say, “Oh, you can do this and this” after when you're 18 and it's like but we have to get it done before you turn 18

JK: Mmm

YP4: Like I ended up going to therapy when I were about 18ish

JK: Mm

YP4: and then that that actually affected my mental health quite bad, because the psychologist I felt like she don't understand special educational needs

JK: Okay

YP4: because she were like saying stuff like what you won't really say to anyone

JK: Hmm

YP4: like “oh your parents are being over protective” and that

JK: so it feels like it’s really important that people involved in services have a good understanding of, of, your needs and what it means to have special educational needs,

YP4: Yeah like probably not all the services but if you've gone to like work with children and young people with special educational needs like if you're going to talk to em know what it’s like

JK: yeah

YP4: because I basically burst into tears

JK: Oh sorry

YP4: Tuesday and I was in on Friday and then she just turned around and said “Oh, your mum’s phoned to tell us this has happened” and I went “Well, yeah” “we think your mum and dad’s being overprotective I think your mum and dad’s been overprotective” but she’s the one who’s like saying like bulldozing it over and then it's like it's taken me a week to recover from that therap therapy session beforehand and then I'm doing it all over again.

JK: Sounds like a little bit of a tricky, bit of a tricky patch.

YP4: Yeah, so it's like if people can just understand what special educational needs are and how it can affect someone. Like yeah everyone who's got special educational needs are unique, like I'm different to [*participant name*] and [*participant name*] is different to [*participant name*] but at the same time they’ve just got a basic understanding then that might help em figure out what's the best of approach

JK: Yeah

YP1: I think with that for us as young people, we would be there to maybe help support or create a package of training and stuff like that

JK: Okay

YP1: eh, we've done this before and delivered [?] training created a resource pack and stuff like that and I think perhaps we were vital because I think you guys get to see with training perhaps which are quite boring don't include like stuff like mentimeter or Kahoot and stuff like that. So you're not as engaged and stuff like that. And and once you start to get engaged, I think you'll start to learn a bit more about that information and take it on board, and I think that's what's needed. So where we’re normally here to actually support other services that maybe delivers them packages create them resources because I think that's really important. If we get young people to actually make the resources, you guys actually tend to take it more in we’ve noticed. So like there were something what we did and something what [*organisation name*] did many years ago and people couldn't remember the training. And we gave them ours, maybe two years later, they’re still talking about it

JK: Ah

EP3: Ah

YP1: which is still quite amazing to think that

EP3: {Yeah

YP1: they've still remembered training. So it really does show that youth voice does have an impact on that service.

JK: Mmm that’s a really interesting story yeah. Oh what a good conversation we’ve had we we kind of talked about em things that we want to tell each other and things we wanted to ask and then this kind of imagining what it could could be like and it feels I think we've managed to do those three things. Is there anything kind of anybody feels is kind of left over or you would have really liked to talk to about today or heard about maybe or asked about that’s we didn’t manage to do?

YP2: I can't really think of anything sorry

JK: no no it’s good that’s good I’m pleased! [laughing]

YP4: Have we done the third question about mental health one

YP2: Oh yeah the yeah do you want to read that [*participant name*]?

YP1: Yeah I think it's more about working together for educational psychologists to work with mental health services and stuff like that. So like maybe they have the resources, or you guys are able to know how to refer that person if there might be issue. And I think that's the question we wanted to know. How do you work with mental health services? Do you not work, is it are you technically in your own bubble and you’ve just got to refer in or have you had training to help you support stuff like that, or?

EP3: I suppose sometimes it depends on where or what you're doing I suppose. Sometimes, like I'll go to a meeting around em which is for one young person and it might be us and members of kind of different mental health services that are there so I've been to ones with CAMHS and then I’m going to forget all the names because things keep changing all the time, [*organisation name*] have come to one of those as well, and I’ve once had someone from [organisation name] be there so we've tried to work together in that kind of way. I know that our managers sort of talk to CAMHS and [*organisation name*] about I suppose more of that, that’s slightly higher level than me when they're thinking about how things are are running. Em, quite often I ask schools to make referrals, I think that might be helpful

YP4: Yeah em [*organisation name*] have like come and spoken to us about sort of what they offer, I guess when the mental health services change, you know, by the people and things like that, em yeah so they’ve come and told us what they can offer, which is helpful to know to then when we're working with the young person or child, em we know that that support is there em but then we wouldn't I haven't made a referral yeah, I guess I would perhaps recommend that to the school to do, but yeah.

YP4: So would you be able to like, I know you won't be able to step in, but would you be able to like I don't know how to word it? Do you know like with the waiting lists like it could be ages. Could you, like, figure out if there’s like anything what could be in place while they wait?

EP2: I guess we could we could try and work with the situation and the adults and the young person involved in order to try and support the young person whilst they’re on the waiting list possibly

YP4: Because depending on what age CAMHS like close CAMHS only go up to 18 don’t they. So then they will have to go into a different meeting list.

EP2: Yeah, I think so.

JK: I think so well I don't know, actually, but yeah

YP4: because like when I got to the age well I never used CAMHS before. I went straight to IAPT

JK: Okay

EP2: Okay

YP4: Like when my mental health deteriorated and then that were just useless the first time because they tried to refer me to [*local centre*] where I’ve been before. But they said that it's not that bad so there’s sessions with IAPT and then next last time I went well they said if I get like this again, I can go to [*local centre*]. But then they changed it all because they then turned around and said, “Oh can't accept you’ve got too high of an H IQ.

JK: So it’s kind of confusing isn’t it about

YP4: Yeah like what has my IQ got to do with my mental health?

EP3: Mmm

JK: Yeah so there's a lot of kind of em confusion isn’t there around how services work together and how to make sure that people get the support that they that they need

EP3: I take it I suppose with our service kind of regardless of where people are on waiting lists or whether they’re on them at all we’d work with with anyone in the moment, but they’re in and sort of think about what is working well, what are the tricky bits and and try and help to move things a bit like [*participant name*] was saying

EP2: yeah, yeah and like I was kind of saying like in the moment, you know they might be on a waiting list for CAMHS but we would try and support the immediate situation, I guess, and context em whilst you're waiting, I guess which yeah, it it it is challenging and can be quite tricky. Yeah.

EP3: Mhmm.

JK: Thank you, everybody, for all your contributions and thoughts it’s been absolutely fascinating. Em, like I said before, em, when [*participant name*] was just stepping out, I'm gonna do the what I'll do is I’ll write all the I'll stop the recording and then I'll take it home and I’ll put all this record is put onto a transcription, so write it all out basically, and then I'll have a look through it and start thinking about what I think we've learned from our conversations. But I'm very happy to, and you know, keen to come back at some point and have another conversation if you're up for that but equally if you don't want to do that because I know you’re busy as well

YP2: Definitely be up for it

JK: Okay great so I can bring that back at some point. I can't promise any kind of timelines [laughing] but I promise I will I'll be back in touch once I've done my bit of it and I’ll bring it back and see what people think.

YP4: Yeah.

JK: Is that all right? Okay great

# Appendix R: Relationship Between Stages of the Analysis

**Table 6**

*Relationship Between Stages of the Analysis*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage One:**  **Discursive construction (key features)** | **Stage Two: Discourses** | **Stage Three:**  **Action Orientation** | **Stage Four:**  **Positionings** | **Stage Five:**  **Practice** | **Stage Six:**  **Subjectivity** |
| ***Unestablished***:    Absent, gap, unknown, not formed, relationship dependent on seniority (for EPs), intermittent, short-lived, something observed, missed opportunity. | Legal  Inclusion  Voice | Whilst acknowledging the distance between the groups, both YP and EPs use the *unestablished* construction as an opportunity to learn more about one another. | EPs position themselves as open to engaging with CYP but blocked by various barriers.  YP place themselves as separate, but equal to EPs.  In the joint focus group, the dialogue between EPs and YP supports them to move to more equal positions. | EPs in their own discussion struggle to find a path through the barriers which separate them from YP. YP are more effective in finding ways to consider working with EPs in meaningful ways. This carries over into the joint focus group where there is a negotiation which leads to overcoming the gap between them. | EPs are open, willing and curious about making links with YP, but are passive in the face of the barriers they face.  YP have a sense of their rights and a pride in their role as actors in SEND systems. This is also reflected in the joint group where they appear to grow in confidence, which seems to have a positive effect on the EPs’ experience of the relationship. |
| ***Service***:  EPs providing a service to YP and YP receiving a service from EPs in shared systems; professional; influenced by wider systems. | Humanist  Medical | Both EPs and YP use the *service* construction to try and connect to the other group. For the YP it functions to give them a platform to critically engage with EPs’ work and for EPs it functions to show how they can work on YPs’ behalf.  In the joint focus group neither EPs nor YP respond to each other’s attempts to connect through this construction and it stops being effective. | The EPs’ use of the *service* construction positions them as active and YP as passive actors in the system. EPs in the joint focus group appear to lose their active position in the face of wider system issues raised by YP.  The YP begin by taking a passive position as receivers of a *service*, but use this as a stepping stone to taking a position as effective social actors. EPs do not respond to YPs’ initial passive position, so blocking YP from moving to the more active position. | EPs’ description of their work as working on behalf of YP opens the possibility of systemic practice including CYP. Equally, for YP the *service* construction opens the possibility for YP to work with EPs in making changes to shared systems. However, the failure to make connections through the *service* construction in the joint focus group closes this possibility. | EPs appear to have a sense of moral purpose and courage to act in the leadership role to ensure the system meets CYPs’ needs. YP seem to have confidence, and a sense of legitimacy and equality. There is a sense of disappointment from both YP and EPs in the joint group when the *service* construction is ineffective as a connection which might create change. |
| ***Partnership*:**  Future focused, imagined, ongoing, with depth and meaning, two-way. | Relational | EPs’ use of this construction shows how the relationship can have an effect beyond the relationship in ways which benefit CYP. The YP, by highlighting the value of their experiential knowledge, also open the possibility of collaboration. Both EPs and YP also use this construction in the joint focus group to open the possibility of an ongoing dialogue about how shared systems work and how EPs operate in ways which impact on YP. | EPs position themselves as equals to YP and in the joint group this also has the effect of building a sense of agency in EPs.  YP position themselves as knowing actors who have valid perspectives on systems, so bringing a sense of equality between the YP and EPs.  These positions are taken briefly in the separate focus groups and extended into the joint focus group. | The *partnership* construction opens the possibility of collaboration between EPs and YP, and for EPs it appears to allow the possibility of overcoming barriers to engage with CYP in shared conversations about systems. The YPs’ experiential knowledge seems to act as a positive force on EPs’ practice. | EPs seem to feel positive, hopeful and like a force for good in CYPs’ lives. In the joint group the EPs seem to move through uncomfortable feelings with respect to YPs’ potential active role to being cautiously optimistic about the prospect on an ongoing relationship.  YP appear to have a sense of hope that the *partnership* could create meaningful change. They appear to grow in confidence in terms of the value of their potential contribution to the partnership. |

# Appendix S: Initial List of Labels from EP Focus Group Analysis

CHAMPION

WORKING ON BEHALF/WORKING ON BEHALF OF INDIVIDUAL CHILD

ADVOCATE

INDIVIDUAL CHILD

PROBLEM SOLVER

DETECTIVE

AT A DISTANCE

SUPPORTER

PROTECTOR

TALKING ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL CHILD WITH OTHERS

WORKING WITH OTHERS IN AN IND CHILD’S BEHALF

WORKING WITH OTHERS AROUND CHILDREN

WORKING WITH OTHERS TO MEET CHILDREN’S NEEDS (EDUCATIONAL)

CHANGE-MAKER ON BEHALF OF A CHILD

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER IN SERVICE OF CHILD

FACILITATING OTHERS’ RESPONSES TO CHILD

LISTENING AND REPRESENTING IND CHILD’S VIEWS

CONSIDERING CHILDREN’S NEEDS

FACILITATING CHANGE IN SYSTEMS AROUND CHILD

CREATING SYSTEM AROUND A CHILD

CHILD AT CENTRE OF A SYSTEM WE ARE WORKING IN (BUT WITHOUT CONTACT)

BYSTANDERS/INACTIVE IN TERMS OF ENGAGING WITH GROUPS OF CHILDREN

ABSENT/INACTIVE ENGAGING WITH COLLABORATIVE WORK

RELIANT ON CYP TO BE EFFECTIVE

ENGAGING CYP (AS A GROUP)

CYP AS HELPERS OF EPs

NOT ENGAGED WITH GROUPS ENOUGH

ACTIVELY ENGAGING CYP IN A COMMUNITY PROCESS

WORKING WITH CYP

SEEKING THEIR VIEWS

KNOWING/CATEGORISING CYP

SUPPORTING CYP AS ACTIVE AGENTS OF CHANGE

EPs AT A DISTANCE FROM ACTIVE CHANGE WORK

EPs SUPPORTING WORK WHICH GAINS CYP VOICE BUT AT A DISTANCE

FEELING LIKE OUGHT TO BE SEEKING OUT INFO FROM OTHERS ABOUT CYPs ACTIVITY

RECEIVER OF INFO FROM CYP ABOUT THEIR ACTIVITY

EPs AS A GOOD JUDGE OF MEANINGFULNESS OF PARTICIPATION

KNOWING BUT NOT DOING

BLOCKED FROM DOING

OTHER ROLE EXPECTATIONS GETTING IN THE WAY

POWERLESS TO WORK IN WAYS WANT TO

AT A DISTANCE/OBSERVING OTHERS RELATING

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

ROLE EXPECTATIONS ACTING AS A BLOCK

STATUTORY ROLE REQUIREMENT ACTING AS A BLOCK

POWER/CONTROL OVER HOW EPs WORK WITH/RELATE TO CYP

CYP WANTING TO TALK TO EPs AND COMMUNICATE IDEAS FOR CHANGE

EPs AS SEEN OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM BY CYP

EPs AS TRAINED TO SUPPORT/ADVOCATE

EPs MOSTLY WORKING AT IND LEVEL

REPERESENTING CYPs VOICE TO HAVE IMPACT IN DIFFERENT SERVICES

EPs KNOWING HOW/WHAT CYP SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN

CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS

ON THE SIDE OF CYPs RIGHTS

HUMANIST

ADVOCATES FOR THEIR RIGHTS

PARTNERS

RESPONSIBLE FOR CYPs VOICES AND EXPERIENCES BEING HEARD TO INFORM CHANGE

KNOWING ABOUT CYP

CYP BRINGING ENERGY TO THE RELATIONSHIP

CYP SEEKING/WELCOMING EPs TO HELP TO EFFECT CHANGE

EPs SUPPORTING EMPOWERMENT & INVOLVEMENT IN CHANGE PROCESS AT IND AND SYSTEMS LEVEL

LACK OF POWER TO CREATE CHANGE ON THEIR BEHALF

GATHERING/LISTENING TO VIEWS

EXPLORING VIEWS ABOUT CHANGE WITH CYP

DOING ON BEHALF AS UNDERLYING LOTS OF EP WORK

GAP IN ENGAGEMENT

CYP INDIRECTLY INFLUENCING SYSTEMIC CHANGE THAT EPs INVOLVED IN

GAP

UNDERSTANDING/CONSIDERING CYPs EXPERIENCE/NEEDS/VIEWS

HEARING CYPs VIEWS

GAP IN THIS WAY OF RELATING

REPRESENTING CYPs VOICE

NEEDING PROTECTED TIME TO COLLABORATE

LACKING CONFIDENCE IN WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP AT A DISTANCE

DESIRE FOR CLOSER WORKING RELATIONSHIP

GOAL SETTING/ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEFICIT/BEHIND/COMPARISON WITH OTHER SERVICES

ENGAGEMENT

WEAK

STATUTORY/LEGAL BARRIER

QUESTIONING/LACK OF KNOWLEDGE/CURIOUS

POWERLESSNESS/LACK OF AGENCY

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

CURIOSITY REGARDING DEMOCRACY OF CYPs ACTION

CURIOSITY REGARDING CYPs CAPCITY/SUCCESS TO MAKE CHANGE

NARRATIVE – WANTING TO HEAR ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES

COLLABORATION

GAINING VIEWS

CHILD CENTRED

CAPTURING CYPs VIEWS

EPs INVOLVING CYP

ACCESSIBILITY

SEEKING VIEWS

SUPPORTIVE – EP ROLE TO SUPPORT ACCESS

DISABILITY RIGHT/RESPECT

SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

# Appendix T: Labels from EP Focus Group Organised as Discursive Constructions

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| **WORKING ON BEHALF**  IMPLICIT – ASSUMED  IMPLICIT – ASSUMED  IMPLICIT  WORKING ON BEHALF/WORKING ON BEHALF OF INDIVIDUAL CHILD  WORKING WITH OTHERS IN AN IND CHILD’S BEHALF  CHANGE-MAKER ON BEHALF OF A CHILD  BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER IN SERVICE OF CHILD  ADVOCATE  CHAMPION  DOING ON BEHALF AS UNDERLYING LOTS OF EP WORK  FACILITATING OTHERS’ RESPONSES TO CHILD  LACK OF POWER TO CREATE CHANGE ON THEIR BEHALF  PROBLEM SOLVER (ON THEIR BEHALF)  EPs AS A GOOD JUDGE OF MEANINGFULNESS OF PARTICIPATION (ON CYPs BEHALF)  **HEARING AND REPRESENTING VOICE**  LISTENING AND REPRESENTING IND CHILD’S VIEWS  SEEKING THEIR VIEWS  EPs SUPPORTING WORK WHICH GAINS CYP VOICE BUT AT A DISTANCE  REPERESENTING CYPs VOICE TO HAVE IMPACT IN DIFFERENT SERVICES  RESPONSIBLE FOR CYPs VOICES AND EXPERIENCES BEING HEARD TO INFORM CHANGE  GATHERING/LISTENING TO VIEWS  HEARING CYPs VIEWS  REPRESENTING CYPs VOICE  GAINING VIEWS  SEEKING VIEWS  CAPTURING CYPs VIEWS  RECEIVER OF INFO FROM CYP ABOUT THEIR ACTIVITY  EXPLORING VIEWS ABOUT CHANGE WITH CYP  UNDERSTANDING/CONSIDERING CYPs EXPERIENCE/NEEDS/VIEWS  VOICE  EPs WORKING WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS TO GAIN PUPIL VOICE  **PROTECTIVE**  PROTECTIVE  PROTECTIVE  PROTECTIVE  PROTECTIVE OF CYP IN ACTION PROCESS  **EPs KNOWING/JUDGING**  KNOWING/CATEGORISING CYP (NOT BASED ON CYPs VIEWS OF THEMSELVES)  EPs KNOWING HOW/WHAT CYP SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN  KNOWING ABOUT CYP (WHEN IMAGINING WORKING TOGETHER)  ACCESSIBILITY (WHEN CONSIDERING CYPs ACTION WORK – NOT CURRENTLY WITH EPs)  ACCESSIBILITY (WHEN CONSIDERING CYPs ACTION WORK – NOT CURRENTLY WITH EPs)  EP ROLE TO UNDERSTAND SYSTEMS AROUND CHILD  EPs KNOWLEDGE AND ABILITY IN PARTICIPATION PROCESSES  **WORKING AROUND**  AT A DISTANCE  TALKING ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL CHILD WITH OTHERS  WORKING WITH OTHERS AROUND CHILDREN  WORKING WITH OTHERS TO MEET CHILDREN’S NEEDS (EDUCATIONAL)  FACILITATING CHANGE IN SYSTEMS AROUND CHILD  CREATING SYSTEM AROUND A CHILD  CHILD AT CENTRE OF A SYSTEM WE ARE WORKING IN (BUT WITHOUT CONTACT)  EPs SUPPORTING WORK WHICH GAINS CYP VOICE BUT AT A DISTANCE  **CHILD CENTRED**  HUMANIST  CHILD CENTRED  **NEEDS**  CONSIDERING CHILDREN’S NEEDS  **RIGHTS**  CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR RIGHTS  ON THE SIDE OF CYPs RIGHTS  ADVOCATES FOR THEIR RIGHTS  DISABILITY RIGHT/RESPECT  EPs WORKING WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS TO GAIN PUPIL VOICE, BUT THERE ARE LIMITS TO WHAT THE CYP ARE BEING ASKED TO DO – ITS ABOUT VOICE RATHER THAN YP TAKING ACTION  EPs CREATING THE CONDITIONS FOR CYPs ACTION |
| **BLOCKED**  BLOCKED FROM DOING  OTHER ROLE EXPECTATIONS GETTING IN THE WAY  POWERLESS TO WORK IN WAYS WANT TO  ROLE EXPECTATIONS ACTING AS A BLOCK  STATUTORY ROLE REQUIREMENT ACTING AS A BLOCK  STATUTORY/LEGAL BARRIER  ROLE EXPECTATIONS GETTING IN THE WAY  EPs AS SEEN OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM BY CYP |
| **WEAK/THIN/LACKING/DISTANCED**  BYSTANDERS/INACTIVE IN TERMS OF ENGAGING WITH GROUPS OF CHILDREN  ABSENT/INACTIVE ENGAGING WITH COLLABORATIVE WORK (WITH CYP **COMMUNITY**)  NOT ENGAGED WITH GROUPS ENOUGH  EPs AT A DISTANCE FROM ACTIVE CHANGE WORK  KNOWING BUT NOT DOING  AT A DISTANCE/OBSERVING OTHERS RELATING  MISSED OPPORTUNITIES  CYP INDIRECTLY INFLUENCING SYSTEMIC CHANGE THAT EPs INVOLVED IN  FEELING LIKE OUGHT TO BE SEEKING OUT INFO FROM OTHERS ABOUT CYPs ACTIVITY  QUESTIONING/LACK OF KNOWLEDGE/CURIOUS  **GAP/**GAP IN ENGAGEMENT  GAP  GAP IN THIS WAY OF RELATING  LACKING CONFIDENCE IN WORKING COLLABORATIVELY, COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP AT A DISTANCE, DESIRE FOR CLOSER WORKING RELATIONSHIP  **EPs AS POWERLESS (TO CONNECT WITH CYP)**  POWER/CONTROL OVER HOW EPs WORK WITH/RELATE TO CYP  POWERLESSNESS/LACK OF AGENCY  DEFICIT/BEHIND/COMPARISON WITH OTHER SERVICES  WEAK  ENABLING SUPPORT  EPs AS TRAINED TO SUPPORT/ADVOCATE (THIS SEEMS TO BE BRIDGING DISTANCE/CONNECTED)  QUESTIONING/LACK OF KNOWLEDGE/CURIOUS  CURIOSITY REGARDING DEMOCRACY OF CYPs ACTION  CURIOSITY REGARDING CYPs CAPACITY/SUCCESS TO MAKE CHANGE  NARRATIVE – WANTING TO HEAR ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES  NEEDING PROTECTED TIME TO COLLABORATE  LACKING CONFIDENCE IN WORKING COLLABORATIVELY  COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP AT A DISTANCE  DESIRE FOR CLOSER WORKING RELATIONSHIP |
| **CONNECTED**  WORKING WITH CYP  **‘WORKING WITH’, LINKING ‘WORKING WITH’ TO ‘SYSTEMIC WORK’**  EXPLORING VIEWS ABOUT CHANGE WITH CYP  **COLLABORATION/PARTNERSHIP/COMING TOGETHER**  PARTNERS  COLLABORATION  GOAL SETTING/PLANNING TO WORK MORE COLLABORATIVELY  EPs AS SEEN OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM BY CYP  ENGAGING CYP (AS A GROUP)  ACTIVELY ENGAGING CYP IN A **COMMUNITY** PROCESS  EPs INVOLVING CYP  ENGAGEMENT  SUPPORTING CYP AS ACTIVE AGENTS OF CHANGE (THIS WAS IN CONTEXT OF DIRECT WORK WITH A GROUP)  SUPPORTIVE – EP ROLE TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO COPRODUCTION WITH EPs (connected but imagined)  EPs SUPPORTING EMPOWERMENT & INVOLVEMENT IN CHANGE PROCESS AT IND AND SYSTEMS LEVEL (this goes in connected/real)  EPs CONSIDERING YPs NEEDS IN CONTEXT OF COLLABORATION  **YP HELPING EPs**  RELIANT ON CYP TO BE EFFECTIVE  CYP AS HELPERS OF EPs  CYP WANTING TO TALK TO EPs AND COMMUNICATE IDEAS FOR CHANGE  CYP BRINGING ENERGY TO THE RELATIONSHIP  CYP SEEKING/WELCOMING EPs TO HELP TO EFFECT CHANGE  EP CARES ABOUT CYPs EXPERIENCES & FEELINGS & RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ADULTS & CONSENT |

1. Community Education was the name given to the profession and qualification used at that time in Scotland to refer to a generic role covering the strands of adult education, youth work and community work. The Alexander Report (Scottish Education Department, 1975) underpinned the establishment of the role within Scotland-wide local council Community Education Services. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Educational and Child Psychology, 2006, Vol 23 No.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)