

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION
OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)
WHERE THEY HAVE HAD A STATEMENT WHICH CEASED**

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**LAURETTA WALKER
School of Education**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APA	Annual Performance Assessment
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
ASL	Additional Support for Learning
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BESD	Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties
BPS	British Psychological Society
CoP	Code of Practice
CSCI	Commission for Social Care Inspection
DECP	Division of Educational & Child Psychology
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education & Employment
DfES	Department for Education & Skills
DoH	Department of Health
ECM	Every Child Matters
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GP	General Practitioner
GRP	Good Research Practice
ICT	Information Computer Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
JAR	Joint Area Review
LA	Local Authority
MLD	Moderate Learning Difficulties
NHS	National Health Service
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologist
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SFR	Statistical First Release
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SpLD	Specific Learning Difficulties
SSA	Special Support Assistant

ABSTRACT

An overview of current research and literature has established that there is little information about the views and perceptions of those young people who have had a statement ceased. The views of how these particular pupils were involved in the process of the statutory assessment, the issuing of their statement, the benefits of the support allocated to them and the subsequent ceasing of their statement. were obtained using a semi-structured interview. In order to construct a shared understanding of the SEN culture experienced by them, their perceptions of this culture was obtained through the use of a business management tool called the 'cultural web' (Johnson and Scholes, 1999). Based on the young people's combined descriptors and characteristics of current SEN culture, the cultural web framework enabled the design of two cultural webs, the SEN culture experienced by them and the SEN culture to 'aspire' to.

This research fundamentally supports current legislation and policy, in particular the recent Education and Inspections Act (2006) that states that Local Authorities are now required to ascertain young people's views on activities, facilities and provision, and to ensure that these are taken into account.

The key findings of the research suggest that the majority of the young people interviewed were effective in identifying factors and practical solutions that could contribute to improving the SEN culture that they had experienced. Their knowledge and experiences need to be incorporated into various SEN processes, and the recommendations made in this thesis are very much based on these. It also highlighted that, contrary to legislation and policy, these young people were not generally provided with an opportunity to have their voice heard within the SEN culture, and as a result felt themselves passive participants within the education and SEN systems.

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale for the study

Although there is increasing research and literature on 'the voice of the child', involving children and young people¹ in participation and research into the views of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), there is a distinct lack of research with pupils who previously had a statement of SEN which was subsequently removed. This may be because current research has tended to concentrate on obtaining the views of those young people who still have special needs and their current involvement in decision-making, the identification of their SEN, and their specific views on SEN.

1.2 Aim of the study

'One of the most valuable contributions of new voices is their sharing of actual feelings, day-to-day living, and experience of professional care'. (Corbett, 1996, p. 65)

The aim of this research was to carry out an in-depth study exploring the views of pupils who have 'completed' the statutory assessment process and their reflections on their involvement in the SEN system. The author sought to gain insight into their daily practice, classroom experiences and feelings of having had a statement of SEN in order to describe their views of special educational provision. Their experiences and perceptions of the SEN culture are developed to bring the views of this group of young people to the attention of school personnel, SEN services, including the author's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and Local Authority (LA) policy makers.

For the reader to be able to compare this research with their own setting, or make an assessment of the extent to which these results can be generalised, some contextual information about the council in which the research took place is necessary.

The research took place in a small Metropolitan Borough Council in North West England with a population of 183,500. The Authority has recently improved its rating in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the Government's way of assessing Councils. The 2006 CPA awarded the Council a 3 star rating for overall performance. On the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004), the Borough is the 99th most deprived in the country (out of 342), although it compares favourably to other Greater Manchester Councils (3rd least deprived). Within the Borough there are both very high areas of deprivation (i.e. within the 10% most deprived nationally), and a smaller number with very low deprivation (i.e. within the

¹ The terms 'children', 'young people' and 'pupils' are used interchangeably throughout this study.

10% least deprived nationally). The borough has a younger population profile than the UK as a whole (19.0% between 0-15; 18.0% nationally) (Office of National Statistics, 2005).

There are fifteen high schools, including one special school, none of which have sixth form colleges. They range in size from 169 to 1,138 pupils. There are also sixty-five primary schools (including one special school) and a Pupil Referral Centre. The overall pupil population (including nursery aged children) in January 2007 was 28,024. The numbers of children and young people with statements remains slightly above the national average (approximately 2%) with the trend profile similar to that for England as a whole.

In terms of educational performance, the Council has been amongst the country's top performing Councils for a number of years. Performance is in A and B quartiles nationally and mainly in the A quartile against statistical neighbours. It regularly achieves standards above the national average at all Key Stages. The percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A-C GCSE grades is consistently above national averages. In the Audit Commission School Survey, support services for SEN are a strength and are in the top quartile.

The research focused on six young people in years nine to eleven from five different secondary schools, who previously had statements for specific learning difficulties (SpLD). These statements were ceased following the year nine transition review. In planning this research, the author believed that selecting pupils from these particular year groups would provide opportunities for them to reflect on their school career and provide up-to-date insights into their experiences, helping other young people going through the statutory assessment process now and in the future, and informing school, LA, SEN and EPS policies and procedures. Moreover, the information obtained should assist the author in promoting more professional and innovative practices to actively involve young people in the design of service delivery within the EPS.

The increasingly changing educational, political and litigious climate and the whole system of reform of children's services, together with other growing complex experiences faced by young people with SEN may mean that conclusions drawn from the findings in this research may be relevant to other young people with SEN.

1.3 Research questions

In order to obtain the above information, two research questions have been asked.

1. What are the perceptions of young people about their involvement in the process of statutory assessment, the issuing of a statement, the benefits of the support allocated to them by the statement and the subsequent 'ceasing' of that statement?
2. What are their perceptions of the SEN culture?

The study used a semi-structured interview to gather qualitative data. The research was designed to investigate the perceptions of young people across a number of generalised themes - beginnings, participation, SEN provision and support, relationships, endings and labels in the context of having a statement of SEN. The research findings were categorised and themed but remain representative of the language, emotions and thinking expressed during the interviews.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

Following this introduction, the thesis continues with a literature review, presenting research related to the construction, definition and language of SEN. An overview of SEN policy and legislation, the SEN framework and the statutory assessment process provide the reader with the context for the incidence of SEN statements both nationally and within the author's LA. The author highlights internal factors and national drivers contributing to the agenda for change that impact directly on children and young people in the areas of SEN and the statutory assessment process. The impact of these drivers for change and the culture within SEN services raise issues relating to the resourcing needs of both education and SEN stakeholders. Chapter 2 also illustrates the inherent difficulties that arise from attempts to obtain the voice of the child, to engage children and young people in participation and to enable their involvement in decision making. Examples of involving children and young people with SEN in research are provided.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the legislative framework and the challenges to ensure quality in educational research. The importance of ethics and the ethical challenges when involving young people in research are discussed. The author has used the British Psychological Society (BPS) 'Code of Ethics and Conduct' (2006) and other ethical guidance to demonstrate how she has satisfactorily addressed ethical issues in her research. The author also describes key ethical considerations and challenges faced during the actual research and how these were resolved.

Chapter 4 considers options for addressing the research questions, evaluating different tools and methods for consulting with children and young people. The research methodology and design selected are described. The interview schedule and the 'cultural web' (Johnson and Scholes, 1999; Johnson et al, 2005), a tool used in this research to identify and describe culture in the area of SEN, and the statutory assessment process are described in detail.

In Chapter 5 the data collected are presented. Research question one was addressed through the use of a semi-structured interview and question two as part of that interview, through the application of a cultural web analysis. The reader is provided with accounts of the past and current experiences of SEN from young people who previously had statements of SEN and also ideas that they would like to see put in place in the future SEN culture. The interview findings and cultural web analysis are presented. A critique of the methods used to collect the data is provided in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6 analyses these findings and seeks to recommend changes required in SEN systems within the young people's schools, the organisation as a whole and the EPS, in order to improve a wide range of aspects of young peoples' experiences of the SEN process. Research limitations and related subjects worthy of further study are also described.

Chapter 7 discusses the issue of researcher positionality and an autobiographical approach is used to make this clear. The researcher reflects on some of her own life experiences, beliefs and values, and discusses how these have impacted on her as a researcher. The effects of the impact of conducting 'sensitive' research in the area of SEN are described. In this particular chapter the focus is switched from 'the author' to 'I', in an attempt to convey to the reader the author's account of her subjective experiences throughout this research and to create an atmosphere conducive to the researcher telling her own story. The author sets out to establish an account of the research experience which is grounded in the real world of the participant (the author).

In Chapter 8, critiques, key themes and conclusions arising from each chapter are summarised and future research directions proposed.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter overview

The active participation of children and young people in the discussions and decisions that affect their lives has become a key feature for all aspects of Local Government services, including SEN and EP services (Todd 2007). The purpose of this research is to elicit the views and perceptions of young people who previously had a statement of SEN. When reviewing the growing literature on the 'voice of the child', the focus has therefore been on literature and policy about children's and young people's participation and their involvement as 'service users'. This especially relates to the SEN and statutory assessment processes, resulting in the LA making available SEN provision, and from the initiation to the removal of a statement of SEN.

The chapter starts with the background to the literature review and provides an overview of how the language of SEN has developed, with reference to the social construction of SEN, discourses and stigma surrounding special needs and disability (Foucault, 1977, Billington, 2000, Corbett, 1996). The policies and legislative background of SEN, and the impact of national drivers contributing to the agenda for change that impact directly on SEN, EP services and on children and young people are described in detail. The SEN framework and the statutory assessment process, the incidence of SEN statements and the current political efforts to reduce the reliance on statements are discussed (Norwich and Gray, 2006). Definitions of customers of SEN services and the needs of education stakeholders with regard to financial resources are also included.

The chapter refers to the 'cultural web' (Johnson and Scholes, 1999, Johnson et al, 2005), one of the tools used for data collection in this research. The final section looks at research already undertaken with children with SEN. Conclusions are subsequently drawn in Chapter 8.

2.2 Background to the literature review

Statistical information has been sourced from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to show that there are growing numbers of pupils whose statements have been reviewed and discontinued (National Performance Framework, 2006, Statistical First Release, Special Educational Needs in England, 2006). General sub-areas of background literature have been reviewed in order to provide a context to answering the two research questions formulated for this small scale qualitative research:

1. What are the perceptions of young people about their involvement in the process of statutory assessment, the issuing of a statement, the benefits of the support allocated to them by the statement and the subsequent 'ceasing' of that statement?
2. What are their perceptions of the SEN culture?

2.3 Construction, definition and language of SEN

Attempts to define the concept of SEN within one overarching framework have been unsuccessful due to the many changes in the language of SEN since terms such as 'idiot', 'imbecile' 'uneducable', 'retarded', 'handicapped' and 'maladjusted' were used to describe those children and young people exhibiting a wide range of difficulties (Corbett, 1996). These 'labels' were subsumed by the more generic term 'special educational needs' in the Warnock Report (Department of Education and Science, 1978). Although this report initially impacted positively on attitudes and provision, replacing the medical model of terminology (where the medical label came before the subject) with practical language, describing what the subject experiences rather than defining who or what they are, it is now suggested that 'SEN is a redundant term, redolent with oblique undertones of exclusion and stigmatization' (Corbett, 1996, p.15).

Foucault (1977) discusses the emergence of disciplinary discourse, and how this reflects the language within a professional group. He provides a framework to view the paradigms that interact with these discourses. Billington (2000) discusses these frameworks in relation to SEN and disability, challenging the culture in which the separating and excluding of children occurs through the pathologizing discourses of stigmatized differences. Fulcher (1989) identifies the emergence of a corporate approach to 'managing disability' as yet another discourse (1989, p.26). This view is supported by Billington (2000) who highlights the large numbers of children who are educated outside of their community due to this discourse of professional justification (p.13) and the authoritarian potential impact of the 'statement'. He argues that with the growth of the 'children industry', there is an investment in categorization and that the compilation of 'statements of special needs' are integral within a historical web of institutional, economic and professional power relations subject to political control and variability (p.54 - 59). Billington also suggests that the statutory assessment process is not intended solely to benefit the child but is required to regulate all kinds of economic potentials.

The field of special education is controversial with various debates about the social construction of disability, special needs and inclusion (Billington, 2000, Roaf, 2002,

Sikes, 2005, Clough and Barton, 1995, Goodley and Lawthorn, 2005, Todd, 2007). These debates have been further intensified following Warnock's (2005) critical retrospective overview, advocating a need for the 'rethinking' of the concept of SEN and the function of the statutory assessment process. The acknowledgment by Warnock (2005) of the damaging impact of the original Warnock Report (DES, 1978) prompted the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee² to conduct its own inquiry into SEN (Barton, 2005).

More recently the term 'additional educational needs' is used to include those pupils requiring a more sophisticated response from schools than routine approaches (Baxter and Frederickson, 2005). 'Additional support needs' replaced the term 'SEN' in Scotland in 2005 as a result of the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Act (2004). The term 'disability' is used for children and young people with one or more difficulties in the following aspects of functioning: mobility, hand function, personal care, continence, communication, learning, hearing, vision, behaviour and consciousness (DfES, 2003). However, whatever label is used, it has tended to have specific implications for young people in education (Jackson, 2001). The importance of the school as central experiences of childhood, with the power to shape children's views of themselves, both negatively and positively, and the consequences for the rest of their lives is highlighted (Billington and Pomerantz, eds, 2000). As most educational systems operate within a hierarchical model, it is unsurprising that notions of 'child deficit' ensue, i.e. the difficulty lies within the child and those children with the 'deficit' are expected to fit into pre-existing curriculum and structures, educational experiences therefore impact on young people's life and achievement opportunities (Billington, 1996, 2000).

Norwich and Gray (2006) describe the 'new look' of SEN and the proposals to replace statements by a special needs profile through objective criteria used by independent accredited profile assessors. Although similar to the current framework, they argue that it betrays a lack of familiarity with current policy and that tensions will still exist because parents are currently assured that a statement, as a legal contract, provides additional resources and redress for them. The future of statements, the allocation of additional support via a statement of SEN, and the concept of SEN having outlived its usefulness are all questioned, as there are many other vulnerable children in need and at risk who require the development of co-ordinated support plans, relevant to 'Every Child Matters' (Department of Health, 2003), within a Children's Services context.

² Please note this is referred to throughout as the Select Committee (2006)

The theory of labelling has been considered by Kitsuse (1962). Criticisms highlighted at that time, such as subjectivity, the long-term effects of labelling and stigmatisation, are still applicable today, as reported in Dunsmuir and Rowland's (2006) review of the report of the Select Committee (2006), and the BPS submission to this Inquiry (2006).

2.3.1 The language of SEN

Historically 'stigma', 'exclusion' and 'difference' have been associated with those identified as having a label. For the Greeks, stigma referred to bodily signs (cut or burned into the body) that called attention to some moral failing on the part of the person bearing them. These signs were intended to cause other people to avoid the bearer. Ainley et al (1986) suggest that today stigma involves the same sense of moral disapproval, denigration and avoidance, requiring a consideration of 'normality' and social norms. Stigma might also be considered to be the negative perceptions and behaviours of 'normal' people when comparisons are made to anyone different from themselves, and associated almost exclusively with 'inferior' forms of appearance, conduct or ethnicity. Components of stigma evolve with a society as part of the culture through the altering of descriptions and categories of stigma and changing the consequences of stigma (e.g. attempts to de-stigmatise homosexuality). Ainley et al (1986) argue that stigma are tenacious and that attempts to de-stigmatise take a long time, and may inadvertently reinforce a stigma by bringing it into the public eye.

Goffman (1963) coined the term 'master status' to describe the effect of stigma, the different reactions elicited (e.g. sympathy, ambivalence, avoidance, fear) and the domination of this as the definition of the individual throughout their life, often leading to downward social mobility. He describes a stigma as dehumanising, giving rise to feelings of inferiority (or superiority in others), although acknowledging that some individuals rejoice in having a stigma. This viewpoint corroborates research undertaken by Ainscow (1999), Farrell (2001) and Armstrong (2003).

Although the term 'stigma' is not commonly used today, the report of the Select Committee (2006) and the BPS submission to this inquiry (2006), highlight that assessments not based on need categorise pupils and can be stigmatising and self-fulfilling. Farrell (2001) suggests that the effects of labelling as a self-fulfilling prophecy on 'inclusive policy and thinking' require a move away from category-specific models, a re-emphasis on social and contextual factors, and a move from child pathologization towards increased social and academic expectations and greater flexibility of intervention. He also indicates that difficulties associated with young people lie on a continuum, not static but fluid and developmental.

'Labelling' appears to have replaced the term 'stigma' but of course their effects are synonymous. Gersch and Nolan (1994) reported that pupils believed teachers negatively targeted them when they already had a label. This is referred to in literature (Cooper, 1996) as a 'circle of negativity'.

However, language is power and the language of SEN is composed of words and images which foster fear, mistrust and hostility and are abusive (Corbett, 1996, p.3). In her work with disabled arts performers, she portrays the emotional images and feelings that the words 'special needs' and 'disability' create through use of imagery and powerful descriptive metaphors when the 'helped disabled' do not conform to the stereotypical imagery that relates to disability. Corbett demonstrates the impact of creative expression to show the reality of a disabled identity, illuminating discourse such as aggression, sarcasm, bitterness and cynicism, strongly advocating that we should reject the language of being 'special' but should 'relish difference' (p.49). Lloyd-Smith and Tarr (2000), Rieser and Peasley (2002) and Fulcher (1989) argue that disabling policies and negative constructions of disabled people act as a barrier to life experiences and opportunities, as society and legislation continue to accept and operate within negative and deficit models of disability, the language of need implying weakness, incapability to develop independence and reflecting the powerlessness of people with difficulties.

Corbett's observations regarding the language of 'patronage' (1996, p.13 - 15) may raise issues for LA officers who, as part of the statutory assessment process, make provision "professional patronage" via a statement of SEN, and who expect the child or young person and their parents to be grateful for, and subservient to, the recommendations made by professionals. This expectation not to "spit on this patronage" would be reversed if support was refused by the parents or young people.

Armstrong (2003) also highlighted that the language of special needs perpetuates negative labelling and the promotion of a low self-image. This viewpoint is supported through concurrent research undertaken by Norwich and Kelly (2004) and Kelly and Norwich (2004) of pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD). They identified links between being bullied and the stigma of being labelled as having learning difficulties.

2.3.2 Inclusion and inclusive education

Current educational inclusion practices are challenged by a number of pro-inclusion commentators. Dyson and Millward (2000) and Norwich (1999) highlight the extent of labelling that takes place within an educational system outwardly driven by an inclusive

philosophy, through the Department for Education (DfE) SEN Code of Practice (1994). Although the revised SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a) appeared to move away from the previous category-specific labelling system, the categories of SEN have broadened conceptually into a four-dimensional model based around cognition and learning, language and communication, sensory and motor, and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties. Norwich (2002a, b) does acknowledge that this is for administration purposes and does not take account of the contextual, environmental and other factors that impact on the child or young person. Norwich and Gray (2006) also question the relevance and validity of SEN categories, considering the tension between SEN and disability concepts in legislation and how to give additional provision and support without stigmatising or labelling vulnerable children. They suggest a common framework, using a causal model that would look beyond disability and SEN. They argue that this would address the original causes of difficulties in learning, recognising social and individual factors whilst simultaneously looking at assets, strengths and difficulties.

Roaf (2002) emphasises that inclusion is much more than 'integration' or 'mainstreaming', terms used prior to inclusion, and which have been used interchangeably and inaccurately, thereby causing confusion and ambiguity. Todd (2007) also challenges contexts where children and young people are seen in terms of categories and labels, leading to narrow identity conclusions. She adopts a definition of inclusion that encompasses all children and young people rather than selecting or excluding them because of their particular group identity.

As educational inclusion is no longer the focus of SEN but is informed by central educational debates, especially the integration of children with SEN in mainstream schools, Clarke and Venables (2004) contribute to the inclusion debate, by stressing that in order to meet the needs of children and young people without identifying and/or stigmatising them, there needs to develop a flexible education system in which all young people's diverse needs are catered for. There are concerns that children and young people are categorized by professional or agency boundary rather than by an analysis of their needs, and that the 'boxing up' of services for them by professionals, and services drawing up their own lines of delineation have led to children and young people falling 'through the netness' (Roaf, 2002, p.5) and being inappropriately compartmentalised. It is argued that inclusion must also encompass the wider community rather than just be education specific (Ainscow 1998, Todd, 2007).

Todd (2007) argues that to secure the 'inclusion wall', partnerships, collaborative working and planning for integrated services are key to the Government's long term strategy. This view is reinforced by Roaf (2002), who identifies both the difficulties in co-ordinating services to promote inclusion and the factors contributing to successful inter-agency work.

2.4 SEN policy and legislation

Whilst the major theme of this research - young people's perception of SEN and having had a statement of SEN - is explored later, it is essential to have an understanding of the educational and legislative context in which SEN and the voice of the child has developed.

Within a SEN framework, the national context that has prompted professionals to consider ways in which children and young people might contribute to decision making about their SEN originated from the Warnock Report (1978). This referred to a notional 2% of children as having severe and complex special needs requiring special provision to be made for them. In 2005 approximately 18% of pupils in England (1,500,000) were categorised as having SEN, and 3% (250,000) had a statement of SEN (Audit Commission, 2007). In some LAs 5% of pupils have statements of SEN (BPS, 2006). The Warnock Report (1978) prompted a number of education acts, educational policies, legislative responses and developments in SEN which are summarised below. The most significant of these include the 1981 Education Act which established the unitary concept of 'SEN' and, in terms of children's rights, both the 1989 Children's Act and the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These major pieces of legislation have influenced most subsequent legislation.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) ratified and accepted as a statutory duty in 1995, was the first piece of international quasi-legislation that established minimum standards for children under Human Rights Law. It was Article 12, which stated a child's rights to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account, which really influenced practice for children and young people's participation. It stated that they were subjects with individual rights, as opposed to being merely recipients of adult protection. It also stressed that they have the right to express their views freely in all areas in which they are involved, and that these views should be listened to.

The Children Act (1989), described by Roaf (2002) as the most comprehensive piece of legislation enacted about children, defines a 'child in need' and advocates that the

child's welfare is paramount, and that their feelings and wishes must be taken into account as they are citizens with a right to be heard. However, it also states that there is a fine balance between giving children a voice and overburdening them with decision-making procedures. The Act also promotes the notion of parental responsibility rather than rights, and gives children a clear place in the decision-making process. This was further enhanced by the Adoption and Children Act (2002).

The 1994 DfE Code of Practice (CoP) proposed a 5 stage model for the identification of SEN. It promoted practices that took account of children's views about their special provision throughout the assessment model. It emphasised that children have the right to be heard and should be encouraged to participate in decision-making about provision to meet their needs and their views sought and recorded whenever possible. The CoP also suggested that special educational provision was most effective when those responsible took into account the ascertainable wishes of the child. 'Excellence for all children: meeting SEN' Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) 1997 and the subsequent 'Meeting SEN – a Programme of Action' (DfEE, 1998) also promoted the inclusion of children with SEN within mainstream schooling whenever possible.

The Human Rights Act (1998) identified 16 basic rights concerning matters of life and death, e.g. right to protection from torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, rights in everyday life (what a person can say and do, their beliefs, their rights to a fair trial, etc). These are rights and freedoms that belong to all individuals regardless of their nationality and citizenship and are fundamentally important in maintaining a fair and civilised society.

The revised SEN CoP (DfES, 2001a) and SEN Toolkit (2001b) both suggest a graduated level of response to meeting SEN, placing considerable emphasis on the importance of involving children and young people with SEN in decisions about their own learning, exercising choice, and in identifying ways of removing any barriers to learning they might face. They highlight that all children and young people, even those with the most severe or complex needs, will have views about their education and the choices before them and that, regardless of the need, all children should be enabled to communicate their wishes, using specialist tools and techniques as appropriate. The CoP and SEN Toolkit stress the need for valued action after consultation. It is not enough to involve pupils superficially; they should feel confident that they will be listened to. Not only is the CoP explicit in its emphasis on a participatory model, but it makes it clear that all professionals coming into contact with children should listen to

their views and that the LA has a critical role in encouraging and supporting participation across all phases of education. In addition, the Special Educational Needs Disability Act (2001) highlights the importance of pupil participation in decision-making.

The Education Act (2002) also promotes the participation of children and young people in decision-making in schools with a dedicated action plan (DfES 2002a) and Consultation with Pupils (2002b).

The Audit Commission reports 'Special Educational Needs – A Mainstream Issue' (2002) and 'Statutory Assessments and Statements of SEN: In Need of Review?' (2002), looked at how well the education system nationally serves children with SEN, considering the identification of need, the presence, the participation and achievement of children with SEN in mainstream schools. This was followed by 'Managing SEN – Self Review Handbook for Local Authorities' (DfES, 2002), endorsing the trend for pupils with statements of SEN to receive their schooling in mainstream settings.

'Every Child Matters' (DoH 2003), later embodied in the Children Act (2004), proposed a new agenda for the delivery of integrated children's services with the focus on listening to the child. Pupil participation is an integral part of the Act, promoting the involvement of children and young people in decision-making, and stressing the importance of listening to them through consultation. It proposed that genuine service improvement was only attainable through involving children and young people and listening to their views. The five outcomes key to 'Every Child Matters' (ECM), 'Stay Safe', 'Be Healthy', 'Enjoy and Achieve', 'Make a Positive Contribution', and 'Achieve Economic Well-Being', were directly as a result of what young people said they wanted to improve. 'Every Child Matters – the next steps' (DfES, 2004), and 'Every Child Matters: Change for Children' (DfES, 2005) further develop the agenda for children and young people. A children and young people's version of ECM was also produced (DfES, 2005), the first time that a paper had been written specially for young people. The Children Bill (2004) introduced significant responsibilities for the co-ordination of these new integrated services and established a 'Children's Champion'.

'Removing Barriers to Achievement - the Government's Strategy for SEN' (DfES, 2004), provided a vehicle for ensuring that all children and young people have a right to have their views taken into account in decisions about their education. It highlighted that LAs need to develop practical tools for consulting and involving children and young people in decisions about their own learning, individual education plans (IEPs), reviews of statements, planning for the transition from school to adult life and the development of school policies and authority-wide strategies for improving local services.

'Working Together; Giving Children and Young People a Say' (DfES, 2004) was developed by young people and adults. This guidance was designed to encourage best practice in pupil participation, and aimed to help LAs and schools become more effective at involving children and young people at both the individual and policy level.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) report 'Children on Rights and Responsibilities' (2006) states that children and young people are very clear that they want their rights and responsibilities to be recognised, to be treated as individuals, not as a large group called 'children', and to be listened to and given a real say in decisions about their lives.

The Education and Inspections Act (2006), now requires LAs to ascertain young people's views on activities, facilities and provision, and to ensure that these are taken into account in the delivery of services. A recent analysis of the content of seventy-five LAs' Children and Young People's Plans by Lord et al (2006), on behalf of the National Foundation for Educational Research, highlighted positive examples of contributions to the ECM outcomes, including strong production values reflecting an intention to be accessible, to engage young people and to encourage their participation in discussions about local service provision.

Despite the rhetoric and recommendations to support pupil participation and inclusion continuing through the legislation described above and through the 1996 Education Act, 'Excellence for All Children' (DfEE, 1997), and the 'SEN Action Programme' (DfEE, 1998), researchers (Davie and Galloway, 1996, Armstrong, 2003, Middleton, 2004) argue that true participation and inclusion still does not exist in education, but that it is through the development of social policies and legislation relating to children and young people that practice has been most substantially affected. Todd (2007) emphasises the importance of partnership and multi-agency working to assist the development of participative and inclusive education, drawing on a range of theoretical ideas to examine and challenge why partnership working is so difficult to achieve. She concludes that 'Partnership may have had its day. Maybe it has never existed' (p.132). However, on a positive note, she identifies that the national reorganisation of services for children and Government initiatives provide exciting opportunities for engagement with emerging new discourses in contrast to current opposing, restricting and oppressive discourses.

2.5 National drivers for change and culture within SEN and EP services

In addition to the legislation described above, there are a number of other drivers that impact on SEN and EP services and ultimately affect children and young people. In particular, 'Scoping the Market for Children's Services' (DfES, 2004), the 'National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services' (DoH and DfES, 2004), Youth Matters (2005) and the 'Children's Workforce Strategy' (DfES, 2005).

The DfEE (2000a/b) and DfES (2006) reports on the directions for EP services, provide an overview of internal and external drivers that dictate that all EP services will undergo a period of fundamental and rapid change (Farrell et al, 2006). This requires anticipation and analysis of these factors before they occur (Stobie, 2002); for instance, change within interlinked and interdependent systems in response to changing circumstances impacts on others and may create a ripple effect.

Alongside this, the Select Committee (2006) placed the SEN system under scrutiny. It argued that the existing statutory assessment system is no longer fit for purpose, and recommended a fundamental and radical review of government policy on SEN, stressing that SEN should be seen as integral to the wider educational context rather than as a 'bolt-on' system. It also advocated the need for more extensive longitudinal research to address issues of provision for children with a range of needs, for the Government to provide strategic guidance to LAs on co-ordinating inclusion policies and to improve provision, training and resources for those pupils with behaviour, emotional, social difficulties (BESD) and autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) to prevent their exclusion.

As a result of this Select Committee Inquiry, a number of recommendations were made to improve outcomes for children with SEN. These include the provision by Government of clear national guidance on the criteria for awarding statements of SEN, LAs should plan to take account of a clear national framework linked to minimum standards to ensure consistency of outcomes for children with SEN. They should also retain a proportion of SEN funding centrally to maintain support services such as EP services. Dunsmuir and Rowland (2006) contributed to this Select Committee (2006) debate and concluded that there is a need to adapt to changing contexts and demands, to anticipate, prepare and be pro-active rather than wait for and resist change.

2.5.1 Quality assurance, performance management and cultural change

In reviewing the background literature on organisational culture and change management in education, business and public sector literature, (Johnson and Scholes, 1999, Johnson et al, 2005, Farnham and Horton, 1996, Audit Commission, 2001), quality assurance and performance management are also relevant to this research. There is relatively little research on the culture or management of change within specific areas such as SEN and EP services, although research on this has been undertaken in the National Health Service (NHS) by Johnson and Scholes (1999). Services are now required to embrace the government's Modernisation Agenda, which incorporates the Change for Children programme, and the development of more integrated children's services. In practice this will mean organisational restructure, new commissioning arrangements, managing change through the co-operation agenda, and introducing preventative work in extended schools, whilst at the same time maintaining core quality services. However, these organisational, cultural, managerial, human resource, performance and financial changes required by this Modernisation Agenda, together with new infrastructures and inspection regimes affecting EP services, now require Principal Educational Psychologists to have a broader range of business management skills (Gersch and Hardy, 2005).

As performance assessment is an essential part of the management of EP services (Rowland, 2002), the use of a cultural web (Johnson and Scholes, 1999), can support the performance, self-audit and consultation agenda required as part of external and internal LA service assessment frameworks. These frameworks require services to consult with both non-user and user groups (former, potential and current) to identify core, peripheral and potential users, and to apply appropriate, relevant and 'fit for purpose' tools to elicit their views (Cohen et al, 2000).

Rowland (2002) argues that the leadership and management of EP services has not been taken seriously as an area for academic study and that, unless this is addressed, educational psychology as a profession is at risk of being left behind as other services embrace the Modernisation Agenda. However, despite the requirement for stakeholder accountability, Leadbetter (2000) argues that there is limited research on the quality of EP and SEN services, as the services in general are weak at monitoring the implementation and evaluation of quality assurance mechanisms, and lack clarity with regard to choice of operational models. Rowland (2002) recognises that measures to demonstrate the 'uniqueness' of EP interactions with school staff, LA personnel, parents and children have not been fully developed. He highlights that whilst much of the information obtained about SEN services, including EP services, is quantifiable

data (e.g. the percentage of EP advice completed within the statutory timeframe), little is available on the qualitative areas of EP work. Historically there have been no expectations on SEN or EP services to provide qualitative or quantitative data to inform strategic planning (Leyden, 1999). Individuals working within these services have not been required to evaluate or provide evidence of their work in terms of impact and outcomes now required by inspection regimes such as the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) and Joint Area Review (JAR).

2.5.2 The cultural web framework

Responding to requests for management research to engage with both the world of theory and practice, Johnson (1987) worked interactively with managers to explore how understanding of organisation culture informed deliberations on strategy development and strategic change in organisational settings. Johnson's work has in turn, informed theoretical understanding of the links between organisational culture and management through organisational case studies that focussed on the implications for the concept of collective understanding, the significance of organisational routines and the management of strategic change. These case studies were presented as visual cultural webs of an organisation (Johnson 1987, Johnson and Scholes, 1999 and Johnson et al, 2005), and are described as a framework to be used within businesses to better understand the influences of culture on both current and future organisational processes and strategies.

The cultural web model looks at an organisation from six inter-related dimensions, and identifies the stories, symbols, power, organisation, controls, rituals and routines within it. A cultural web (Figure 1) is a simple graphic descriptor of six organisational circled frames of reference as described above, all characteristic of that tool for exploring the many facets that impact at a national, regional, organisational, functional/divisional, situational or individual level (Johnson et al, 2005, p. 203). In Figure 1 the circled frames of reference also include questions that prompt descriptors characterising the current culture under analysis. Responses to these questions provide a means of understanding the influences of culture on both the current and future organisation.

The model can be used to help make sense of and examine aspects of an organisation's culture, and consider the strategic changes required to produce a future cultural web (a cultural web to aspire to). Johnson and Scholes (1999) also identify a list of questions that organisations should ask themselves when undertaking a cultural web analysis (Table 1).

A cultural web is based on a paradigm (set of assumptions) held in common and taken-for-granted within an organisation. Institutional theorists look at similarities between organisations, especially common assumptions and practices, and argue that this results in 'industry recipes' (Johnson et al, 2005 p.199) that are so institutionalised that it is difficult for them to be changed. Culture can be analysed by observation and 'surfacing' the many assumptions and beliefs rarely talked about in an organisation via the cultural web framework. There are also useful questions to be asked that can help build up an understanding of culture through the elements of the cultural web (Table 1). Johnson et al (2005) argue that responses to themed questions described in the cultural web literature (Table 1) and integral to the aspect of the cultural web under discussion, can be used to plot out a tentative cultural web for all levels and types of organisations or individual situations that can then be analysed. Moreover, they argue that cultural webs can also be used to understand a person's attitude and perspective of a situation and then explore those attitudes further.

In an example of a cultural web drawn up by managers in the National Health Service (NHS), the NHS paradigm reflects the common public perception in the United Kingdom and describes:

"the NHS is a good thing, a public service, free at point of delivery".

It also identifies medical values:

"clinicians' values, providers know best, acute sector superior, ours" (p.204)

Johnson et al (2005) argue that this paradigm reinforced the behaviours observed in the other elements of the cultural web. The illustration showed that the overall picture of the NHS was that of a 'producer-driven' culture dominated by medical practice, with a division between clinical aspects of the organisation and its management. In this NHS culture, management is seen as relatively unimportant due to the historically fragmented power bases where clinicians' values and working practices dominate. Johnson et al used this example to show how through the analysis of this information, an NHS web could be drawn up identifying changes required that would result in an aspirational web. They also argue that similarities can be found across many public sector organisations even Universities where the taken-for-granted assumptions about academic research is the primary role of the organisation could be challenged if Universities were placed under pressure to raise more revenue from teaching.

Figure 1 - The Cultural Web Framework (Johnson et al, 2005)

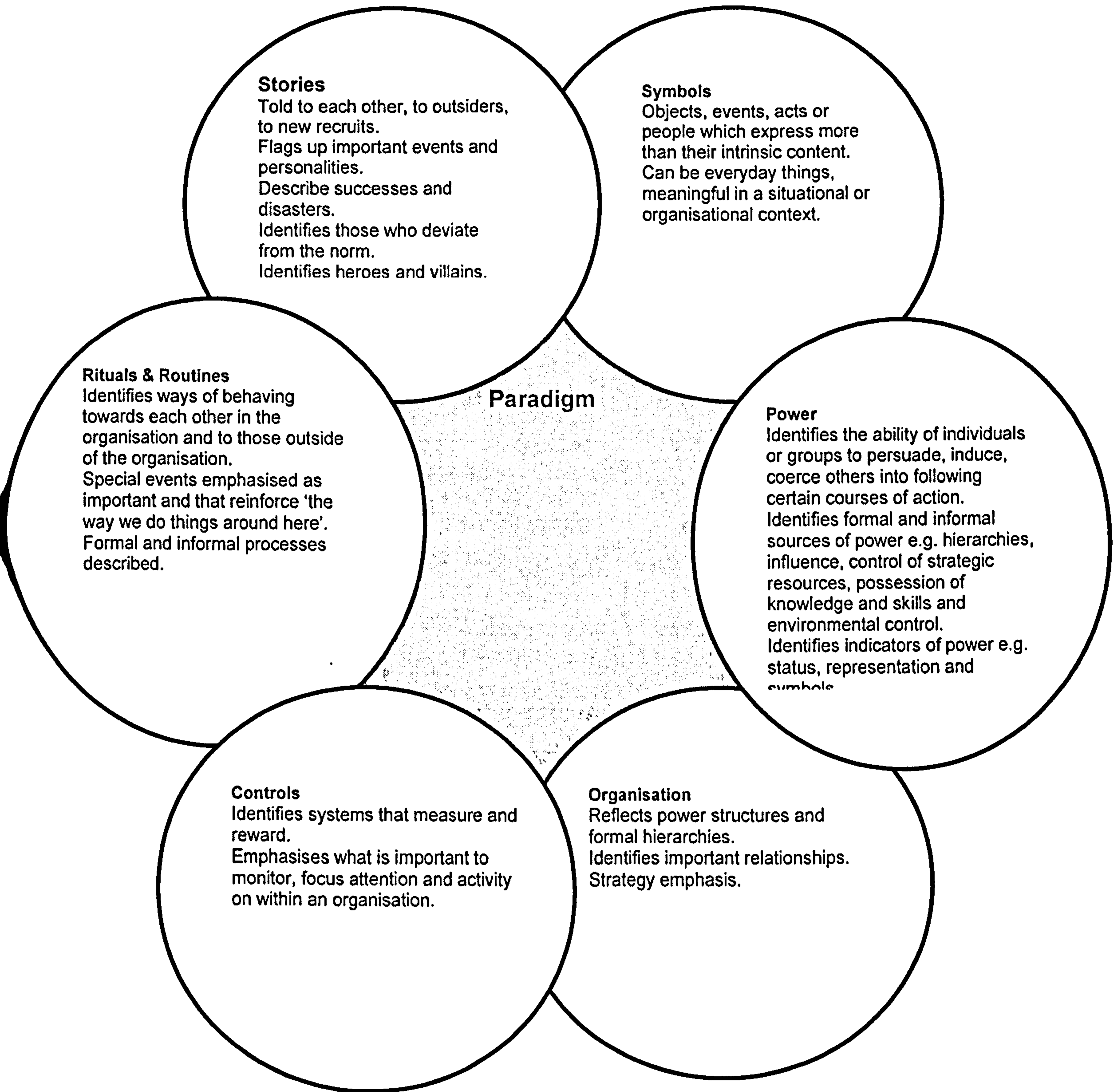


Table 1 - The Cultural Web: some useful questions (Johnson and Scholes, 1999)

Stories

- What core beliefs do stories reflect?
- How pervasive are these beliefs (through levels)?
- Do stories relate to:
 - strengths or weaknesses?
 - successes or failures?
 - conformity or mavericks?
- Who are the heroes and villains?
- What norms do the mavericks deviate from?

Symbols

- What language and jargon is used? How internal or accessible is it?
- What aspects of strategy are highlighted in publicity?
- What status symbols are there?
- Are there particular symbols that denote the organisation?

Power structures

- What are the core beliefs of the leadership?
- How strongly held are these beliefs (idealists or pragmatists)?
- How is power distributed in the organisation?
- Where are the main blockages to change?

Organisational Structure

- How mechanistic/organic are the structures?
- How flat/hierarchical are the structures?
- How formal/informal are the structures?
- Do structures encourage collaboration or competition?
- What types of power structure do they support?

Control systems

- What is most closely monitored or controlled?
- Is emphasis on reward or punishment?
- Are controls related to history or current strategies?
- Are there many/few controls?

Routines and Rituals

- Which routines are emphasised?
- Which would look odd if changed?
- What behaviour do routines encourage?
- What are the key rituals?
- What core beliefs do they reflect?
- What do training programmes emphasise?
- How easy are rituals/routines to change?

Overall

- What do the answers to these questions suggest are the fundamental assumptions that are the paradigm?
- How would you characterise the dominant culture (defender, prospector and analyser)?
- How easy is this to change?

2.5.3 Cultural webs within educational psychology

As described above, cultural webs are used in business management to diagnose change and describe culture within organisations. More recently they have been included in psychological literature (Hardy and Salter, 2001), supporting the emphasis on business management and leadership, in addition to more technical professional development within the context of educational psychology (Gersch and Hardy, 2005, Noaks, 2005). A cultural web can be used to analyse the performance of any service, allowing an assessment of its effectiveness to be made in a quantifiable way. The author argues they can also be used as a tool to consider organisational, operational or structural changes required by the challenging agendas that EP services now face, and to enable those involved in the process to identify characteristics that inhibit or encourage change. The potential effects of a cultural shift can be mapped out (Hardy and Salter 2001) and used to draw up an aspirational cultural web.

A cultural explanation of strategy development (Johnson et al, 2005) is that it occurs as the outcome of the taken-for-granted assumptions and behaviours in organisations. In terms of psychological literature, Burnes (2000) and Norwich (2000) argue that change has always been a feature of organisational life. Johnson and Scholes (1999) argue that organisations have a history beyond the tenure of any of their individual members and have a 'particular' cultural web. The concept of the cultural web is a representation of the taken-for-granted aspects (or paradigm) of that organisation and the physical and behavioural manifestations of organisational culture (Johnson et al, 2005, p. 201). They argue that there will always be a tension existing between 'good traditions' (features which need preserving) and 'bad history' (excuses for not changing practice) due to attitudes characterised by such phrases as:

- "It has always been done that way"
- "It was good enough for..."

The author believes this is also the case in organisations such as Children's Services departments and EP services. The concept of the cultural web (Johnson and Scholes 1999) can therefore be used as a means of understanding how culture at several levels might influence the expectations and organisational objectives of, for example, schools, SEN services and LAs. The importance of the cultural web approach is in highlighting how culture drives strategy, and the need to understand how to gain support in a particular cultural context rather than assuming that rational processes such as planning and resource allocation will be enough.

There are assumptions which are taken-for-granted within an organisation and are unlikely to be seen as problematic. However, problems will arise if significant change in the organisation is needed or expected. For example, LAs are now expected to fund the prevention of SEN and to reduce reliance on statements.

A cultural web analysis of an EPS was previously undertaken by the author as part of an investigation into EP practice, drivers for and management of change (Walker, 2005). This was in part due to increasing literature into quality assurance and EP accountability (Thomson, 1998, Bartram and Wolfendale, 1999), and Imich's (1999a,b) research into the deployment of EP time, highlighting a wide diversity of practice within services and a lack of commonality about some aspects of work.

The author believes that the cultural web can also be adapted as a tool for consulting and eliciting views from young people about their perspectives on a variety of situations, interactions and experiences. In this research, the cultural web model was used to examine aspects of the SEN culture by young people who previously had a statement of SEN. The themed questions described in the cultural web literature (Table 1) and integral to the part of the cultural web under discussion are described fully in Chapter 4.

2.6 The SEN framework and the statutory assessment process

Schools are usually the first to identify the child's difficulties and, following placement on the CoP graduated level of response (DfES, 2001a), undertake school based intervention and request advice, intervention and assessments from external agencies. Children and young people with SEN requiring the provision of resources over and above that which the school could reasonably be expected to provide undergo a process called statutory assessment (Warnock, 1978). Statutory assessment and statements were intended to identify, clarify and ultimately make provision for a range of individual SEN. When a statement of SEN is issued, this allows the allocation of additional resources to that school, now funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant, and formal recognition and protection of this provision.

The term SEN masks the huge variation in the background, placement and educational circumstances of children and young people (DfES, 2001a,b). There are no nationally established criteria against which LAs judge the complexity and severity of an individual child's needs, leading to parental complaints about postcode lotteries (Select Committee, 2006), although National Curriculum, attainment data, cognitive functioning, and developmental delay are taken into account. Communication, physical,

medical, emotional and behavioural criteria may also be factors in determining whether an LA should issue a statement of SEN. An EP assessment may lead to a request for psychological advice from the LA. This advice helps the LA to determine whether the child meets their criteria for the issuing of a statement under the terms of the 1996 Education Act, and the appropriate provision for that child.

2.7 The incidence of SEN statements

Some brief statistical information will help put the research in context. In 2006 there were 236,750 pupils with statements. This information is sourced from the Statistical First Release {SFR}, Special Educational Needs in England (DfES, 2006), and includes statistics from the Schools' Census and the SEN2 survey. Further statistical information is summarised in the Tables below:

Table 2 – Special educational needs in England 2006

	January 2003	January 2004	January 2005	January 2006
Total statements maintained	263,680	261,070	253,220	244,400
All school pupils with statements	250,550	247,590	242,580	236,750
% of pupils on roll	3.0%	3.0%	2.9%	2.9%
Newly made statements (previous year)	30,720	28,780	25,990	24,040

The 2006 SFR (DfES) identifies a number of national trends on this and related SEN data:

- 2.9% (236,750) of pupils across all England schools had statements of SEN, unchanged from 2005.
- 58.7% of pupils with statements of SEN were placed in maintained mainstream schools, a slight decrease from 59.6% in 2005. 35% of pupils were placed in maintained special schools.
- There were 1,293,300 pupils with SEN without statements, representing 15.7% of pupils across all schools, an increase from 14.9% in 2005. Contrary to the pattern for pupils with statements of SEN, the incidence of pupils with SEN without statements is greater in primary schools (17.3%) than in secondary schools (15.3%).
- Since 1998 the number of new statements issued has steadily decreased from 36,200 in 1998 to 24,040 in 2006.

- Gender: the incidence of pupils with SEN without statements is greater for boys (one in five) than for girls (one in eight). Similarly the incidence of pupils with statements of SEN is much higher for boys than it is for girls.
- Age: the rate of incidence of pupils with SEN without statements peaks at ages eight and nine. The rate of incidence of pupils with statements of SEN in schools peaks when pupils are aged fourteen at around one in every forty pupils.

In the author's authority, as at January 2006 there were 1,028 children with statements (2.8% of the school population). Further statistical information, again sourced from the SFR (DfES, 2006), is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 - Special educational needs in the author's local authority 2006

Author's LA	January 2003	January 2004	January 2005	January 2006
Total statements maintained	1,098	1,060	1,050	1,028
All school pupils with statements	991	959	914	906
% of pupils on roll	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%	2.8%
Newly made statements (previous year)	145	112	118	108

Some background information is necessary to understand the context of SEN within the author's authority. Historically, children and young people with SEN received a statement of SEN based on an intelligence quotient of 75. Due to a review of those criteria in 2002 (bringing the author's authority more in line with the criteria of other LA's) obtaining a statement has become more difficult (statements now generally issued where the intelligence quotient is 67 or below). In the author's LA, at key transition points (years six and nine), to support the national reducing reliance on statements agenda, all pupils with statements are assessed by the relevant professional to consider whether they still meet the criteria for the category of statement which was issued. In particular, the EP Service would assess progress in terms of cognition and learning. Therefore in some cases the statement may cease.

Table 4 indicates that nationally, the number of reviewed and discontinued statements has decreased from 9,400 in 2003 to 8,650 in 2006. However, concentrating on the category 'Special needs being met without a statement', whilst more statements were discontinued in 2006 than in the previous two years, this is by no means a conclusive trend as over a four year period the figures are virtually unchanged.

Table 4 - Children whose statements have been reviewed and discontinued

National Data	2003	2004	2005	2006
Transferred to another LA	5,480	5,720	5,590	5,130
Special needs being met without statement	2,870	2,500	2,590	2,810
Other	1,050	920	720	710
TOTAL	9,400	9,140	8,900	8,650

The reporting of statistical information and SEN data by the SFR does not fully reflect the progress made by children and young people with SEN where statements have been discontinued. The above data does not provide a breakdown of how special needs are met without a statement, the variables in ceasing a statement are not referenced (e.g. meeting criteria) and do not identify those LAs who do not issue statements but provide equivalent funding to the school. Moreover, the numbers shown in the 'Other' column are proportionally very high. It is not apparent whether these numbers include children who have died, those with custodial sentences or those who are school leavers where the statement would automatically cease.

2.8 The needs of education stakeholders - SEN and links to resourcing

As a result of publications advocating reduced reliance on statements through the resourcing of additional and SEN (Marsh, 2002), the focus on managing the statutory process more effectively (Audit Commission 2002), integrating strategic planning, budget planning and commissioning of services (DfES, 2002, Audit Commission, 2007), some LAs have reduced the numbers of new statements issued, and increased the support available for pupils with SEN without statements.

Todd (2000) argues that the narrative of bureaucracy and control is still in operation in the management of SEN resources and provision. However, the inherent conflict of interest for LAs who have responsibility for the identification of SEN and the obligation to fund the provision required to meet those needs within scarce resources has been acknowledged by the Select Committee (2006). The statutory assessment system was particularly singled out for criticism with concerns expressed about lack of equitability, its cost effectiveness, and high levels of parental dissatisfaction linked to the inconsistencies across LAs with regard to differing criteria used. The BPS (2006) submission to the Select Committee Inquiry referred to the original principles underpinning the statementing process that initially focussed on the needs of children, arguing that this is now a dishonest process, with even the word statementing indicative of how corrupt the formal assessment procedure has become.

The BPS (2006) argues that the changing context of SEN has perpetuated a situation where mainstream schools and parents have an unintended and perverse incentive to pursue funding from the LA via a statement of SEN. The statutory assessment process has led to an education system where mainstream schools have become increasingly dependent on the LA in meeting the SEN of children and young people. The BPS (2006) highlights the serious bias in the allocation of SEN resources from small but vociferous groups of parents aligned to pressure groups prevalent in the areas of dyslexia and autism, and notes that despite the considerable amounts of money involved, after tribunals or disagreement resolution little time or attention is given to monitoring the progress of the children at the centre of the dispute once resources are allocated. The Inquiry recommendation that the government should provide LAs with clear national guidance on criteria for issuing a statement of SEN is still not forthcoming.

A further consequence is that the administration responsibilities resulting from this process have had a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of all the professional groups involved. For EPs, professional practice has tended towards drafting psychological advice, restricting the application of psychology for more constructive and pro-active activities.

The BPS (2006) also argued that a statement of SEN can itself become a barrier to inclusion and progression between education phases, as schools may be reluctant to offer places to children due to their particular SEN. In addition, tensions between SEN and school performance 'league tables' may also deter some schools from accepting pupils with SEN onto their roll (James, 2004). Although individual schools may have a financial incentive to increase the number of statements in their school (Audit Commission, 2007), Clarke and Venables (2004) suggest that, despite attracting additional resources, children with SEN who do not contribute positively to Key Stage examination results or add value in other ways may be seen as adversely impacting on the reputation of the school.

Moreover, where pupils with statements had made progress or reasonable adjustments made for meeting their needs, the suggestion that funding provided by the statement be withdrawn may promote a financial battle-ground culture where continued failure instead of celebrating success has more financial incentive than low examination results and the inconvenience of having pupils with SEN in the school (Clarke and Venables, 2004). Once a child attracts additional funding via a statement there is little

incentive to remove it, since to do so would be to lose funding and make redundant the person employed to support this statement. Children may therefore retain a statement for their whole educational career. Decisions to maintain a statement of SEN can be predicated on the idea the child would fail without the statement, or on fears that transition to full-time education or secondary school may lead to deterioration in the child's functioning without there being any clear supporting evidence for this.

The Select Committee (2006) noted that statements may dictate the type of provision made for a pupil, but do not necessarily ensure the quality of that provision. The BPS (2006) also highlighted the need to ensure that statement funding should be appropriately and efficiently targeted to the need of that pupil, and stressed the accountability of schools for the education of all pupils with SEN. The Audit Commission (2007) examined the costs, economy, efficiency, effectiveness and quality of provision of Council services, concluding that Councils do not know whether they are getting value for money from placements for children with complex SEN, as they do not collate the necessary information on costs and outcomes.

2.8.1 Customer roles

The Select Committee (2006) raises the issue of consumer and customer relationships and roles. The definition of a customer or service user has been debated widely (Lloyd-Smith and Tarr, 2000, Lansdown, 2001, Stobie, 2002, McNab, 2005). Whilst special education professionals suggest that their main clients are the children and young people (Lucas, 1989), others (Gersch et al, 1996) acknowledge the real customer(s) as being parents and schools, although the view of adults as consumers has been challenged by young people's consumer groups (McNeish et al 2000). However, within the literature children are generally seen as possessions and subjects, (Jenkins, 1993, Starkey, 1991), although increasingly as citizens (Willow, 1997). Robinson (2003) also highlights parental rights to state a preference for school placement rather than the child's, implying that parents rather than pupils are regarded as the consumers of education. More recently, Todd (2007) highlights children as the absent special guest within their remit of service users.

Within an EPS, McNab (2005) highlights the difficulties and complexities inherent in identifying the core customer due to the existence of different and dynamic relationship networks between various people, roles and pieces of work undertaken. The concept of the client within this relationship network can comprise several roles: the customer who makes the request for a service to be provided; the recipient on the receiving end of an EPS activity; the beneficiary - where someone derives benefit in some way from the

EP's work; the partner - those involved in investigating, experimenting, teaching and coaching and related maintenance, and the suppliers of resources; and the stakeholder - this relationship supports the service's image and accountability, providing the constructive feedback for service improvement. EPS stakeholders are identified as those who define the context of their work, such as the LA, the Government in terms of legislation, statutory guidance, policy frameworks, as well as the profession of psychology and its ethical codes. McNab (2005) argues that this conceptual analysis has important implications for the understanding of EP service delivery systems, the management of resources and quality assurance, as customers and recipients may have different views about the same piece of work.

Although the SEN Toolkit (DfES, 2001b) and guidance from the Association of Educational Psychologists (2004) place a requirement to incorporate child views, feelings and attitudes into the psychological advice as part of the statutory assessment, this is problematic in itself, as the LA at this point is the customer, not the child. In addition, Billington (1995, 2000), Armstrong (2003), James (2004), Turner (2004) and Harding (2006) all highlight the difficulties in allowing 'marginalised and powerless' voices to be heard in their true context, and the recording of these views by adults. Billington (2000) argues that children and young people (especially those with statements) rarely have their views documented as they perhaps intended, and questions the ownership of the text within the statement and whether it is a true representation of the young person in question.

However, despite the rhetoric that emphasises the pragmatic, moral and legal reasons for consulting and involving children in the SEN process, in practice the customers are still perceived as being the parents, the schools and the LA. In reality therefore, the views of children and young people are not given the same weighting as those other groups (Todd, 2003a,b,c, 2007, Lucas, 1989, Gersch et al, 1996). Where children and young people with SEN are educated in mainstream provision, greater importance should be attached to their voices in educational decision making, their perspectives on their SEN and the provision to meet those SEN, as Norwich (1997, 2002a, 2000b) argues they are crucial to successful inclusion.

In terms of quality assurance, emphasis is now placed on customers providing their views on service delivery. For educational psychology, the core customers (schools) evaluate the effectiveness of their services via the annual Audit Commission School Survey. However, acknowledging that the voice of children and young people should not only be heard but also, when listened to, play a vital role in the planning and effective delivery of services has been argued by Lansdown (2001) and McNeish

(1999). The power of children and young people as consumers has been recognised, children and young people are being asked to evaluate EP service delivery and to make recommendations for improvement (Woolfson and Harker, 2002). More recently consultations have been held with them about how they should be consulted (Woolfson et al, 2006).

2.9 Participation with young people

Many legislative developments that actively promote children's and young people's views and engage them in decisions that may impact on them have acted as a catalyst for research (Lewis et al, 2004). Despite this, tensions still exist as some organisations have adopted a formal commitment to participation and empowerment of children and young people, but yet this is not necessarily reflected by changes in actual service delivery. However, there is evidence of increased voice of the child research in the areas of SEN and educational psychology (Woolfson and Harker, 2002, Woolfson et al, 2006, Todd, 2003a,b,c).

2.9.1 The value of participation

There has been an increase in literature that emphasises pupil participation (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001); the rights of the child (Roaf, 2002); the importance of the voice of the child to inform inclusive policy and practice (Norwich, 1997); the child as a consumer (Lansdown 2001); decision-making and empowerment of the child (Armstrong and Galloway, 1992, Armstrong et al, 1993, Connexions, 2001, 2002, Rose and Shevlin, 2005); involving children and young people in the identification of their SEN (Galloway et al, 1994); involving children and young people at the margins (Billington and Pomerantz, eds, 2004); the emerging new paradigm of childhood (Woodhead and Faulker, 2000), and discourse of control and power (Billington, 2000, 2002, May, 2005).

When given a voice, there is evidence to suggest that the success of policy and practice linked to school improvement, standards and inclusion agendas, is related to the sense of ownership by the pupils. MacBeath (1998) found that whilst investigating pupil perceptions of school efficacy, the quality of students' work improved when they had an input into the process. The positive effect of participation in terms of increased intrinsic motivation levels and academic success (Ainscow and Tweddle, 1991), self-esteem, respect, improved behaviour and commitment as well as wider social benefits allied to child development, democracy, individual rights, empowerment and political development, are also reported by Treseder (1996) and Wise (2000). Similarly Roller (1998) reports on increased independence, perception of personal control,

development of meta-learning styles, personal responsibility for progress and a greater potential for change when young people are involved in assessment, planning and review processes.

Creative approaches are required to engage children and young people in participation and gain their perspectives, especially within educational decision making, in setting targets for their SEN (MacBeath, 1998, MacBeath et al, 2003, Lewis and Lindsay, 2000), and in determining educational provision. Research outcomes have highlighted the positive effects on academic performance, motivation and self-esteem when participation takes place. In addition, research into anti-bullying using pupil perceptions identified ways to develop a safe ethos and culture within a school environment. Young people played an active role in reframing policy and practice to support whole school improvement when a bottom-up model of delivery was utilised, incorporating the voices of everyone in the school (Rowe, 1999). As interest in developing participation grows, so do the methodologies available for doing this (Jelly et al, 2000), although Knight et al (2006), concluded that more research and evaluation is needed to establish which methods are most effective.

2.9.2 Approaches and models of participation

Todd (2003b) and James (2004) advocate that children and young people require a means to participate and to know how to express their views. However, before there can be full participation, Hart (1997) argues that factors central to ineffective participation need to be addressed, such as attitudes towards autonomy, the powerlessness of children in comparison to adults and the development of their interests and competencies. There are a number of different models of participation (McNeish, 1999), but for children and young people different levels of participation are often represented by the ladder of participation model (Hart, 1997), adapted by Shier (2001). This model explores alternate ways to increase participation via openings, opportunities and obligations at different levels on the eight rung ladder. The word participation can be interpreted from simply being heard at rung one (manipulation) to gaining a sense of power and responsibility for decision-making at rung eight (child-initiated, shared decision-making with adults). The model is depicted as hierarchical, the lower three rungs indicating non-participatory ways of working, whilst the top five indicate genuine participation. Treseder and Cowley (2001) and Kirby et al (2003) argue that this ladder approach implies an objective to reach the top of the ladder, and instead suggest a circular non-hierarchical model, where it is not always necessary for individuals and organisations to be positioned at the top, as some children and young people may wish to participate at lower levels, and that as different approaches are

used by organisations to involve children and young people they will always be at various levels.

2.9.3 Participation and associated difficulties

Despite the rhetoric on consultation and participation with children and young people, the lack of pupil participation in educational research and the inherent difficulties associated with this practice and philosophy are recognised by Save the Children (1996). Theories in psychology, including Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955, Ravenette, 1977) and Solution Focused Therapy (de Shazer 1985), continue to be used to elicit young people's views (Maxwell, 2006). However, underpinning a participatory framework should be an understanding of developmental psychology (Piaget, 1929) as a grand theory (Mayer and Salovey, 1999). They argue that the concept of emotional intelligence suggests that a participatory model is most effective with older children and those with more developed cognitive abilities and language, although Alderson (2000) believes that younger children and those with complex and severe learning difficulties can also participate, especially when contributing to the review of their needs.

Gersch (1992) suggests that a participatory framework involves a power shift away from adults towards young people, and that this aids the understanding of individual perceptions as social constructs for both adults and the young people themselves. Hobbs et al (2000) suggest that this shift encourages the individual to better understand their position and allows more appropriate responses and behaviour. However, as the guiding principle behind research and participation with children and young people is that of informed consent, it is recognised that the process is fundamentally flawed due to inconsistent levels of participation requiring some form of communication and collaboration between young people and adults. Ravenette (1977) suggests that there is increased potential for conflict between adults and young people when the adult has limited insight or misunderstands the child's personal constructs of the world. Gersch (1992) also highlights the importance of a mismatch of perception, suggesting that understanding cannot occur without ascertaining and listening to each individual perception. Using experiences and perceptions obtained from children and young people to create a sense of feel and place, has many benefits for adults, especially in terms of labelling, SEN and inclusion, (Sikes, 2005).

Hobbs et al (2000) identify issues for EP practice when undertaking consultation with young people. They suggest that a fundamental review is required before an EPS or an individual can position themselves to hear and use children's stories to challenge the

narrative of individual or service practice, and thereby enable them to feel that they own and can direct their own story. However, they also emphasise that EPs have the ability to bring about a radical change in philosophy and practice through their opportunities to develop the voice of the child agenda. EPs are key to promoting participation through the positioning of the profession and their ability to judge, through a child development model, levels of maturity, cognition and understanding, thereby obtaining informed consent in all aspects of their work.

However, Billington (2000) argues that those in education and psychology confine children through the 'technologies of government' (p.23). These have few benefits for the child recipient, and the training for professionals working with children reinforces this power. The development of the psychologist as 'expert' within 'enclosures of knowledge' (p.29) will always be a barrier to true participatory practices.

There are particularly sensitive ethical considerations and challenges when including more vulnerable children and young people with SEN in research, particularly in respect of researcher interaction and research methodology (Todd, 2003a). Research communities are now tasked with ensuring that all respect agendas, and ethical, moral and safeguarding issues are addressed (BPS, 2006). Despite these challenges, advocates of involving children and young people (Wise, 2000, Hobbs et al, 2000, Norwich, 2000 and Todd, 2003a), highlight the positive, therapeutic effects in addition to the valuable insights gained and used to make positive changes, whether in the individual or in systems, thereby enhancing the child's or young person's happiness and chances of success. It is accepted that consulting disabled children about service use and support is important because this diverse group are more often subject to assessments and medical interventions than other children (Dickens, 2004). Young people with SEN have a valuable contribution to make as their views provide a richly textured account that is available from no other source (Cooper, 1993), as children are experts in their own lives, (Langsted, 1994), increasingly seen as competent social actors with valuable insights, (Prout, 2002), although research literature remains divided on which methodology is most ethically appropriate to establish these perceptions (Lewis and Lindsay 2000). Rose and Shevlin (2005) and Billington (2000) argue that knowledge and power relationships dominate the educational and SEN discourse, that these relationships are rarely examined or challenged, and that those from marginalised groups encounter substantial difficulties in having their voices heard. This is further emphasised by Billington (2006) who asks:

How do we speak of children?

How do we speak with children?

How do we listen to children?

How do we listen to ourselves (when working with children?) p. 8

Further research has been undertaken by Todd (2007), supported by the cohort of educational psychologists in training at Newcastle University, into this complex ethical arena.

2.9.4 Tools for consulting with children and young people

In reality many children and young people may never be able to contribute to the voice of the child debate due to their complex and multiple needs. Nevertheless, all efforts should still be made to hear their voice (Murray, 2004). The challenge when undertaking research with these children and young people is to utilise techniques and develop alternative approaches to respect and accurately reflect their views and opinions. A variety of mediums such as drama, music, photography, games, social interaction activities and workshops (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), artwork and storytelling (Burgess, 1995) can be used to do research differently. Involving young people in research to identify appropriate methods for consultation to reach different groups has also been beneficial (Murray, 2004). For those with communication difficulties, the use of image based techniques, pictorial representations and Information and Communication Technology can also be effective (Kirkbride, 1999 and MacBeath et al, 2003), providing opportunities and alternative methods for recording non-written communication. MacConville (2006) also describes how one Council has taken the rhetoric of policy seriously and developed an approach to consulting disabled children and young people through conferencing. Other data collection methods have been used with young people, including focus groups (Woolfson et al, 2006), drawings (Maxwell, 2006), singular and group interviews (Middleton, 2004), individual case study vignettes (Crozier, 2000), life story methodologies (Armstrong, 2003) and narrative research writing (Sikes, 2005). Various checklists for successful communication with children and young people (Brown and Wragg, 1993, Pomerantz and Pomerantz, 2002, James, 2004) have also been developed. The range of methodologies demonstrates that cohort size and data collection methods can be reduced without losing the voice of the child.

Advocacy is another distinct form of participation, described by Atkinson (1999) as the practice of enabling views and wishes to be heard, and is necessary for those special children who occupy powerless positions in education. There is evidence that peer advocacy groups have proved successful at bringing about change, especially with regard to the development and delivery of local social services practices for children

with disabilities (Willow 2002). Research by the National Children's Bureau (2003) found that participation is enhanced when it is outside the control of professionals, service providers and adults, as this reduces the potential for conflicts of interest. The most productive advocacy relationships exist where advocates can relate to their own personal experiences of discrimination and feelings of powerlessness and disadvantage (Harker, 2002). However, the difficulties in recruiting young people as peer advocates, due to ethical considerations, limited training opportunities and engagement with service providers and organisations are preventative barriers to the widespread use of this technique.

2.10 Children and SEN research

Attempts to elicit the voice of the child and their views and experiences on a wide range of SEN issues are gaining momentum, and a number of surveys, consultation and research initiatives have been undertaken with children and adolescents with mental health needs (Northwest Children's Taskforce, 2002); learning difficulties and disabilities (Lewis 2004); in public care ('Voice for the Child in Care', 1998, Shaw, 1998); disabled teenagers' experiences of access to inclusive leisure (Murray, 2002); children who spend long periods away from formal education (Khan, 2004); exclusion (Northwest Children's Taskforce, 2002); BESD provision (Middleton, 2004, Lown, 2005); special educational provision, inclusion, MLD and bullying in mainstream and special schools (Norwich, 1997, Norwich and Kelly, 2004, Kelly and Norwich, 2004); and school experiences (Parry, 2003).

The views and needs of children and young people as customers of SEN and EP services have been better identified and there are now a number of initiatives that involve them in the design, delivery, process and evaluation of service delivery (Gersch et al 1996). Woolfson and Harker (2002), as part of a Best Value Review of the Renfrewshire EPS, consulted with young people on their views of the quality and effectiveness of EP services and how they should be consulted (Woolfson et al, 2006). This demonstrated that young people had valuable insights and perceptions into improving service delivery, and also showed the value of focus groups as an instrument for data collection. Research such as this has generated the development of EPS information booklets for pupils (Lubel and Greaves, 2000) and leaflets/booklets encouraging the child's or young person's involvement in EP assessments.

Research has also been undertaken on the involvement of pupils in the statutory assessment framework, who are or who have been in receipt of a statement of SEN, and their contributions to the annual review process (Gillespie, 2006). Booklets have

been produced to help them take part in the statutory assessment of their SEN and the annual reviews (Todd 2000, 2003a,b,c, Mortimer, 1996, 2000). Gersch (1996) also provides a useful checklist for schools and EPs to use to assess how much they involve/d children in the SEN process. However, there does not appear to be reference in the literature to instances where a child or young person's statement has been discontinued. There is also limited research questioning whether the statement of SEN made a difference.

A number of resources, standards and guidance documents have been produced for LAs, schools and other organisations to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people at both the individual and strategic level. These include 'Hear by Right' (Wade and Badham, 2003), 'Working Together: Giving children and young people a say' (DfES, 2004), the 'Taking Part Toolkit' (Northwest Children's Taskforce, 2002), 'Ready Steady Change' (DfES, 2005) and 'The Planning and Review Toolkit for use with children with disabilities' (Kirkbride, 1999). Handbooks for professionals have also been developed (Davie et al, 1996). Knight et al (2006) report on a review commissioned by the DfES (2006) on the views of children and young people with learning difficulties about the support they receive from Social Care Services. This followed on from a national survey of ten to seventeen year olds on the same theme (DfES, 2005) as the 2005 DfES survey failed to include any children with moderate or severe learning disabilities because of the additional resources required to include them in the research. Although Knight et al (2006) completed a comprehensive electronic and paper literature review, they found only a small number of studies undertaken with young people with learning disabilities about the Social Care Services provision they receive. Two key messages from this review were the importance of gaining knowledge and competence in the young person's preferred way of communicating, and the need for clarity about the purpose of any consultation and whether it will benefit young people, including those directly involved.

2.10.1 Other research findings

Armstrong (1995) found that pupils with a statement for BESD felt powerless to influence decision-making in the statutory assessment process, perceiving that the assessment had taken place to meet the needs of their teachers and parents, not their own personal needs, and that the process itself constructed the creation of difference which was not in their best interests. This is similar to findings by Swinson et al (2003) who concluded that the behaviour of a BESD cohort reintegrating from special school provision to mainstream was no more challenging than that already experienced in the general school population, and suggested that the labels given to these pupils were

subjective and adult orientated. Research by Middleton (2004) explored the narratives of twenty young people with BESD on issues such as school, their SEN experiences, the role of professionals, their participation in education, the events that led to the statement being issued, labelling and future aspirations. Research findings suggested that many of their academic difficulties were overlooked, but yet the young people were effective in contributing to their own educational development, offering strategies for self-remediation and their future development. Despite evidence in Middleton's (2004) study relating to the positive influence of schools and professionals, the young people involved felt as if their opinions and experiences did not matter and were not listened to.

Whilst much participatory research in education involves pupils, similar methodologies have been used with special education leavers (Cheston, 1994, Farrell and Polat, 2002, and Armstrong, 2003). Despite difficulties associated with this type of research, identifying these former pupils (now adults), drop out rates, witness reliability and the recall of events from a significant past, (Polat and Farrell, 2002), the leavers reported positive relationships between staff and pupils, satisfaction with the academic education they received, and suggested that the school had helped to improve their behaviour. The main negative theme to emerge related to the concept of labelling and stigmatisation associated with having attended a special school for BESD, and the possible negative future impacts of this. This theme was also evident in Armstrong's life story methodologies research (2003), used to elicit past experiences of special education from the perspectives of adults with learning difficulties who attended special schools during 1944. Accounts of their SEN provision confirmed that their experience of special education had affected subsequent inclusion and life opportunities, and that the label of learning difficulties constructed when they were children had permeated all aspects of community, educational and family life. Armstrong acknowledges that, historically, personal experiences are linked to the stigma of receiving special education. The adults involved in the research had not been offered the chance when younger to be involved in any decision making but were perceived as incompetent, passive, voiceless and powerless participants in the special provision process. He suggests that the historical drive to control, dominate and create disciplinary enclosures and later to normalise the SEN population has resulted in a subordinate, diverse and disempowered special provision culture. There is little evidence to suggest this has changed (Middleton, 2004), despite the CoP (DfES, 2001a) emphasising the importance of involving children and young people with SEN in decisions about their own learning and provision to meet their needs.

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CHAPTER 3 - THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES WHEN INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN RESEARCH

3.1 Chapter overview

The author strongly believes that for this research project to achieve the greatest accuracy and validity, recognising and addressing the many ethical challenges that inevitably arise when dealing with children and young people must be assigned a high priority. This chapter therefore describes why ethical challenges are important issues to consider when involving children and young people in research, the potential impact on the quality of that research, and the potential adverse impact on the children and young people themselves if these issues are inadequately addressed.

The relevant legislation and principles and challenges identified by formal professional guidance are considered in detail, and include the BPS 'Code of Ethics and Conduct' (2006); 'Professional Practice Guidelines', BPS Division of Educational and Child Psychology, (2002), (DECP); the British Educational Research Association (BERA), 'Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research' (2004); and Sheffield University School of Education Ethical Review Policy (2006). Other relevant literature on the subject of ethics, educational research and research with children and young people is also considered.

The chapter is constructed around the four principles identified by the BPS 'Code of Ethics and Conduct' (2006)³. For each principle, the individual standards are described, together with an assessment of how other ethical guidelines and literature relate to these standards. The author then describes how each principle and the related ethical challenges were complied with in this research. Where the author experienced ethical problems, these are reported under the appropriate standard. In addition, ethical issues that the author believes are not adequately covered by the Code are also identified, together with her responses to these issues.

Chapter 8 provides a critique of the ethical challenges faced by the researcher during this research.

3.2 The legislative framework

Formal requirements to safeguard children and young people have been introduced through legislation, in particular the Freedom of Information Act (2000) which amended the Data Protection Act (1998). There are also links between these and the Human

³ It should be noted that for the purpose of this Chapter, the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2006) will be referred to as the Code

Rights Act (1998). Difficulties in conforming to the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and subsequent Codes of Practice should be acknowledged, although many provisions of the Act only came into force in 2005, including individual rights of access (a requirement for public authorities to respond in writing to specific requests for information and records management). BERA (2004) guidelines state that researchers must comply with these legal requirements in relation to the storage and use of personal data. Participants are entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored, for what purpose and to whom it may be made available. Researchers must have the participant's permission to disclose personal information to third parties, and are required to ensure that they are permitted to have access to any information or personal data stored about them.

3.3 The importance of ethics in research

Cavan (1977) argues that taking an ethical stance reduces the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth, as the need to respect human dignity is greater, even if this leaves one ignorant of human nature. Wellington (2000) refers to ethics as moral principles governing actions and behaviours for groups, professions and individuals, and that ethical considerations should take precedence in the conduct of any research. Alderson (2000) also argues that bad science is bad ethics, although good science, research design and practice do not necessarily indicate good ethics.

There are many significant ethical, legal constraints, moral obligations, educational implications and dilemmas bound up with engaging young people in research, consultation or project work (Christensen and James, 2000, Harker 2002, Cohen et al, 2000, Robson, 2002), especially when undertaking educational research (Wellington, 2000) and research (e.g. interviews) with children (Wellington et al, 2005).

Ethical guidelines and standards need to be maintained throughout all research. Medical research has many guidelines, ethics committees and safeguards such as peer review to help researchers assess ethical aspects of their work, but similar resources have traditionally been rare in social and educational research (Alderson, 2000). Due to concerns about the ethics of conducting research with children, a survey of research centres undertaking, funding and publicising activities and research with children was undertaken by Alderson (1995) on behalf of Barnardo's. The research found that many did not have any methods of ethical review, resulting in the publication of 'Ten topics in ethical research' (Alderson, 1995) summarising ethical points from published guidelines. Three main safeguards for research subjects were identified, namely the researchers' concern to conduct ethical research, peer review such as by

an ethics committee, and respect for the consent or refusal of research subjects. Other researchers (Wellington, 2000 and Madill et al, 2005) have also produced rules and guidelines, although Wellington (2000) in particular advocates that certain rules should not be broken in the area of educational research as there is no room for 'moral relativism' (p.57).

To prevent a potential increase in legal actions by the general public against professionals for alleged misconduct, many organisations have now established their own governance arrangements and ethics committees (NHS, 2002, 2006), although Madill et al (2005) believe that guidelines often have little direct relevance to actual research practice. They argue that with the increasing popularity of qualitative research there is a lack of high quality supervision in this specialised field, resulting in under prepared research students.

There has been a significant tightening up of university procedures for ethical reviews of research proposals for students using children and young people in their research. Most universities now have their own code of practice on research ethics, or have adapted the BERA guidelines (2004). Sheffield University (2006) highlights that ethical review is a means by which the university can ensure that the researcher and the research participants are protected, and provides a way of giving students the benefit of critical comment from academic staff on addressing ethical issues in the research. In addition, Sheffield University's 'Good Research Practice Standards' (2003) stress that principles and guidelines have developed to protect the reputation of the university from research misconduct and to reduce risk to the university, its departments and individual researchers.

Although social and educational research seldom raises serious physical risks, it has the capacity to cause mental and social harm, and many professional bodies have now published ethical guidelines and associated codes of practice (Alderson, 2000). Psychologists until recently had to carry out research in accordance with the BPS 'Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines' (2000), with special reference to the section 'Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants'. This section stressed that good psychological research required mutual respect and confidence between investigators and participants. In all circumstances investigators should consider both the ethical and psychological consequences for the participants in their research.

More recently, BERA guidelines (2004) reinforced the agenda of respect, promotion of ethical behaviour, attitudes and judgements for psychologists. However, the updated

Code provides a much stronger emphasis on the promotion of respect, making this one of its four key principles.

The Economic and Social Research Council (2004) identified a shortfall in the numbers of skilled qualitative researchers in psychology and questioned 'what was psychology doing about it?' The drive towards qualitative research is now ongoing, although the Quality Assessment Agency (2002) and the BPS revised syllabus for the Qualifying Examination (2002) specify that psychologists should cover qualitative methods. Emphasis is now placed on how qualitative projects are supervised as the role of supervisors has come under scrutiny. Madill et al (2005) also report that supervisors of research students have concerns about their ability to manage students' interpersonal issues, and their own lack of qualitative research skills and background knowledge needed to mentor students to ensure reflectivity and reflexivity when analysing their qualitative material. Wellington et al (2005) also argue that as researchers we need to identify how we perceive and experience studying, as this is a significant factor in how we approach all aspects of the research. Wellington (2000) also suggests that being reflective (evaluating and thinking critically about all aspects of the research) and reflexive (reflecting on self, own thinking and thought processes) are crucial to the conduct of the research demonstrating methodological rigour.

3.4 Quality in educational research: contexts and challenges

There is a growing debate on what good educational research looks like (Wellington et al, 2005) and its fitness for purpose (Cohen et al, 2000, BERA, 2004). While researchers struggle to achieve internal quality in the design of specific research projects, the external contexts and conditions in which researchers are located are equally important in shaping the kind of research product and how it is evaluated, interpreted and used. In the context of educational research, quality and originality are difficult to define due to the inherent challenges of involving children and young people in research. This population of children and young people in different networks and communities of practice have a crucial influence on the ethical challenges faced.

The criteria used to judge good research and the appropriateness of these criteria are discussed widely in the literature (BERA, 2004, Wellington et al, 2005), and are also debated amongst the Sheffield University doctoral community during seminar presentations including 'By what standards should we judge social research?' (Wellington, 2005). Concepts such as rigour, evidence, impact, generalisation, replication, value and context free, reliability, validity, subjectivity, reproducibility and objectivity are all part of the assessment of quality and scientific standards. There are also debates on the relativity of truth and reality, demonstrating that research

communities are undertaking a critical analysis of these concepts. However, in the author's opinion, when debating what is truth, ethical concepts such as safeguarding, risk elimination, and deception seem to be less evident in these judgements. Instead there appears to be a resignation to common-sensical ethical approaches being adopted (Cohen et al, 2000). This could in part be due to the difficulties experienced by educational and university based researchers in reconciling the kind of research expected within the university context, and the need to meet university deadlines or the needs of the organisation.

The quality and originality of research are not dependent on how ethical challenges in working with children and young people have been addressed. These ethical challenges may also not be important to the commissioners, potential users, benefactors or even authors of the research, especially if the research is likely to be judged in an academic context (i.e. as a thesis). BERA (2004) guidelines acknowledge the difficulties faced by researchers, and outline researchers' responsibilities to the participants, sponsors of research and to the community of educational researchers.

The community of educational researchers is now more multi-disciplinary and not all within this community aspire to reach an ethically acceptable position in which their actions are considered justifiable and sound (BERA, 2004). Psychologists as researchers operate differently from other educational researchers or researchers in related disciplines as they adhere to the Code. This makes it even harder to compare and judge the quality of research.

There is now greater emphasis on services to enable participation and to consult with children and young people and hear their voices (May, 2005), as part of academic and market research, for the evaluation of services and the production of media reports (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). This has not placed similar emphasis on researchers' responsibilities when undertaking research or project work involving children and young people (Alderson, 2000). In addition, there is an increase in the number of educational researchers keen to extend knowledge and understanding in all areas of educational activity and from all perspectives - learners, educators, policymakers and the public. However, there does not appear to be any requirement for these individuals to submit an ethical review to their organisation or to acknowledge that they have complied with any ethical guidelines for their research or consultation exercise (Alderson, 2000).

3.5 The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2006)

The principles in the Code are supplemented by other guidelines, statements and standards for ethical conduct with which psychologists are required to comply,

including 'Professional Practice Guidelines', BPS Division of Education and Child Psychology (DECP) (2002), the BPS 'Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines' (2000), and the British Educational Research Association Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2004 (BERA).

The revised Code (2006) builds on the BPS (2000) principles in three significant ways. Firstly, it seeks more fully to recognise the respect principles outlined by BERA (2004), which considers that all educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for the person, knowledge, democratic values, quality of educational research and academic freedom. Secondly, like BERA (2004), it also recognises the tensions of psychologists working in multi-disciplinary contexts and includes reference to multiple relationships where the psychologist owes an allegiance to several different stakeholders. Thirdly, it devotes an entire section to the ethical principle of competence, reinforcing the need for competence of the psychologist (particularly in health related and personal matters) as distinct from that of the child. Unlike BERA (2004) which identified the responsibilities that researchers have towards the research community, the Code acknowledges their responsibilities to clients, the general public, to the profession and science of psychology.

The Code sets out four principles to guide all its members; respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. Each ethical principle is described in a statement of values reflecting the fundamental beliefs that should guide ethical reasoning, decision making and behaviour. These principles are further expanded by a set of standards setting out in more detail the ethical conduct that the BPS expects of its members.

3.5.1 BPS Key Principle 1: Respect

Statement of Values: "Psychologists value the dignity and worth of all persons, with sensitivity to the dynamics of perceived authority or influence over clients, and with particular regard to people's rights including those of privacy and self-determination."

The four standards underpinning this statement are general respect, privacy and confidentiality, informed consent and self-determination.

3.5.1.1 General respect

The Code states that the overriding features are the respect for individual, cultural and role differences, for the experience and expertise of clients and others involved, and the avoidance of unfair or prejudiced practices, stressing the need for the basis of ethical decision making to be explained. The possible impact of research to a range of

equality and diversity factors is also highlighted in standard 3.3 (Protection of Research Participants).

The BERA (2004) guidelines also state that educational research should operate within an ethic of respect for everyone involved in the research, directly or indirectly. The Sheffield University Good Research Practice (GRP) Principles and Guidelines (2003) also refer to considering, respecting and safeguarding the dignity, rights and well-being of participants, though not in terms of equality and diversity.

3.5.1.1.1 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

As the above advocate the need to demonstrate respect based on a number of equality and diversity elements, the author has considered the requirements of the National Equality Standard, (Race Amendment Act, 2000) and its seven strands of diversity (race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, caring responsibilities and age). This enabled the development of a more integrated response to issues surrounding the respect and diversity agenda within the research.

3.5.1.2 Privacy and confidentiality

The Code stresses the need for appropriate record keeping and storage of information to avoid unintended disclosure, and restricting the scope for disclosure of confidential information. In addition, those involved in research should be aware of any limitations to maintaining confidentiality and, if breached, how this should be documented. Audio, video, or photographic recording of participants in research should only be made with the expressed agreement of those being recorded, both to the recording being made and to the subsequent conditions of access to it, with all reasonable steps and security measures taken to safeguard records and ensure that all colleagues understand and respect the need for the confidentiality of information obtained.

The BERA (2004) guidelines 'Responsibilities to Participants' also recognise the participant's rights to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, unless waived. As with the Data Protection Act (1998), information obtained about a participant is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. All records over which a psychologist has control should remain personally identifiable only as long as necessary in the interests of those to whom they refer (or, exceptionally, to the general development and provision of the psychological service). Where disclosures are made, BERA advises that they are recorded.

Sheffield University's 'Principles of Anonymity, Confidentiality and Data-Protection' fact sheet (2003) acknowledges the above, and states that an explanation of the anonymity procedure is required, the extent to which the information obtained from participants will be anonymous, and the special measures to be taken to ensure the confidentiality and security of this personal information. It also indicates that provision for data security at the end of the research must be made.

3.5.1.2.1 Other literature

Issues of confidentiality, anonymity and access to the research findings are also closely linked to the safety and protection of participants. It is important that they are made fully aware of the limits to confidentiality when discussing personal information, and the tensions that may exist between maintaining confidentiality and a professional's statutory duty to report on child protection issues (Tindall, 1999). Where a child discloses that they are at risk of significant harm, the researcher must make clear his/her duty to take action to protect the child, including informing other professionals. In addition, the nature of qualitative research means that participants may be identifiable by people who know them, so researchers can never ensure total anonymity for the participants in research (BPS, 2000).

3.5.1.2.2 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

The anonymity of young people involved in the research was safeguarded as all identifying information was deleted. The author had complete control and custody of the data generated by the research and did not use the young people's names. To ensure data protection compliance, participant consent replies were not opened by administration staff but came directly to the author. The author's diary whereabouts were coded to prevent the recognition of young people on the current open EPS database. Permission to tape record was requested and the participants were offered the opportunity to listen to their responses and/or read the transcript. Analysis of the data took place at home in private surroundings.

3.5.1.3 Consent

The Code states that where vulnerable children are concerned, before agreeing to participate in any research, they will need time to understand the issues and options available in order to give informed consent. Researchers must therefore record how and from whom consent was obtained and the very exceptional circumstances when information may be withheld or clients intentionally deceived.

The BERA (2004) guidelines 'Responsibilities to Participants' also recognise the participant's rights to understand why their participation is necessary, how information will be used and reported on, and who will have access to the findings.

Sheffield University's 'Principles of Consent' fact sheet (2003), states that the first step in the research process is to determine the ability to give consent. Where this is so, all aspects of the research should be discussed with prospective participants, including the position and involvement of the researcher in the research, the purpose, what is involved, how the research is to be conducted, the number of participants, risks and benefits, the time implications and what will happen to the data collected. Consent should be viewed as a continuous process, particularly with longitudinal research, so children and young people must be offered the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time, even retrospectively. Where research involves people under eighteen, as well as their free and voluntary consent to participate, informed consent should also be obtained from their parents or guardian.

3.5.1.3.1 Other literature

A number of issues arise when initially obtaining consent, (Alderson and Morrow, 2004, Cohen et al, 2000), particularly where very young children are involved. Researchers must also recognise that participation is affected by developing interests, maturity and the boundaries of the participant's own competence (Hart, 1997). Competencies required may include participants to be emotionally literate, demonstrating progress both in terms of learning, behaviour and being positive about their career and life prospects. Cognitive, linguistic and physical competencies must also be taken into account (Daniels and Jenkins, 2000). Wherever possible, participants should be informed of the research objectives (BPS, 2000).

Research has often assumed that children and young people with medical, physical, communication or learning disabilities are not competent enough to give informed consent (Murray, 2002, Felce, 2002). Those who do not meet the criterion of competence may require differentiated arrangements or provision made for special consent and safeguarding procedures (BPS, 2000). Inclusion criteria for participants in these circumstances will need to be justified and research information conveyed to their representatives. Consent should normally be obtained from those to whom interventions are offered, taking all reasonable steps to ensure the consent gained is valid, whilst recognising and upholding the rights of those incapacitated children and young people with diminished responsibilities to give valid consent. Where research involves children under sixteen years of age, access will usually be negotiated through

adults (carers, parents or those in loco parentis), who assume a gatekeeper role and decide whether the child should be allowed the opportunity to decide for him/herself whether to take part. Although the gatekeepers generally give consent, there is growing acknowledgement that the children and young people themselves must also give informed consent to be included in research studies, and issues such as consent for access to their personal data should also be considered (Cohen et al, 2000).

Researchers may also be reluctant to directly approach children and young people to request their participation in research due to recent guidance about participation (Children Act, 2004), and increasing concerns around best interests justification, professional abuse (Butler-Sloss, 1988) and child protection (DoH, 2003).

3.5.1.3.2 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

Sheffield University guidelines were followed, and the Sheffield Participant Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet templates (2006) were customised for this research (Appendix 1). The participant information sheet given to the parents and young people was written in clear, simple language and the use of jargon and abbreviations was avoided. It provided sufficient information to enable the young people to make an informed choice about whether to participate in the research.

Telephone contact was made with the parents of the identified participants, and they were advised of the objectives of the research, and asked if they would provisionally allow their child to be involved. If the parents agreed, the participation information sheet and consent form were sent for the parents to gain a greater understanding of what the research entailed. They were then asked to discuss the participation consent form with their child and return it to the author, signed by the young person, in a pre-paid envelope. The information sheet covered all aspects of the research including the potential risks and benefits. Both the initial introductory telephone conversation and information sheet placed emphasis on their right and choice to say no.

All the young people selected as potential participants were able to communicate verbally. They demonstrated that progress had been made through meeting the criteria applied, in terms of literacy, although emotional and behavioural factors were also taken into account for the ceasing of the statement.

Where one young person who originally agreed to take part in the research on the telephone did not return the consent form, the records of the telephone conversation and all other identifying information were destroyed.

3.5.1.3.3 Actual ethical dilemmas that occurred

A young person who during the introductory telephone conversation agreed to take part in the research, later discussed this with the SENCo at his/her school. The SENCo then contacted the LA (not the author) to find out more about the research and who and what was involved and indicated that this young person was 'upset' at being contacted and expressed concern that no-one at school seemed to know about the research. The author was contacted by a member of the LA enquiring about the research. The author then contacted the SENCo to provide reassurance that the research was genuine, explaining that the nature of the research meant that confidentiality had to be maintained. By that time the SENCo had been given a copy of the participation information sheet by the young person, thereby having an overview of the research. As concerns had been raised regarding the SENCo's perception of the conduct and secrecy of the research, the author decided to appraise the Director of Children's Services should the SENCo complain that the young person had been caused distress by being contacted. Although confidentiality had been discussed with the young person and his/her parent, the fact that school and the LA now knew of his/her potential involvement in the research meant that the research could be contaminated if this anonymity could not be guaranteed. The author was placed in an ethical dilemma, namely should the young person be allowed to participate in the research. The author discussed the situation with the parent (and later the young person), who was aware that the child had raised it with the SENCo and acknowledged that the child was initially anxious about his/her role in the research, but emphasised that his/her child was now very keen to be interviewed in order to 'help' others, and would be equally upset if this was now refused. We agreed that the limits of anonymity could not be guaranteed but that additional care would be taken, including the introduction of further safeguarding procedures if necessary.

3.5.1.4 Self-determination

The Code has introduced the standard of self-determination, previously described in the BPS Code (2000) as withdrawal. It states that psychologists should support the self-determination of clients whilst recognising the potential limits placed upon self-determination. The Code stresses that from the first contact, participants must be made aware of their right to withdraw from the research at any time and, in this event, comply with their wishes to destroy any data obtained.

The BERA (2004) guidelines 'responsibilities to participants' also recognise the participant's rights to withdraw, and request that researchers examine their own actions to see whether they contributed in any way to the decision to withdraw. Sheffield

University's 'Principles of Consent' fact sheet (2003) states that the right to withdraw from research at any stage should be made explicit prior to participation and that this right should be respected, regardless of whether payment or other inducements have been made.

3.5.1.4.1 Other literature

Guidance, including the criteria for prematurely withdrawing children and young people involved in the study, and the steps to be taken if they choose to withdraw should be available so far as this is consistent with a concern for their welfare (Alderson and Morrow, 2004). The rights of recipients of psychology services to withdraw consent to interventions or other professional procedures after they have commenced, and terminate or recommend alternative services if there is evidence that those in receipt of their services are deriving no benefit, must be recognised and upheld (BPS, 2000).

3.5.1.4.2 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

As well as the customised participant information sheet (Appendix 1) which stresses the right to refuse to participate and/or withdraw from the research, the young people were also reminded of this by the author before, during and following the interview. They were reassured following debriefing sessions that their data, including tape recordings, would be destroyed if they wished. They were informed that any data collected from these interviews, which was to be published as a thesis, would not be identifiable as relating to them. Criteria for excluding young people from the research were drafted as part of the risk assessment (Appendix 2). Young people would be excluded if they stated that they did not want to take part, appeared distressed by the nature of the research (although this situation would warrant specific closure techniques to be used), or where there was an obvious mistrust of the researcher. Throughout the research, the author presented as competent, friendly and accommodating.

3.5.2 BPS Key Principle 2: Competence

Statement of Values: "Psychologists value the continuing development and maintenance of high standards of competence in their professional work, and the importance of preserving their ability to function optimally within the recognised limits of their knowledge, skill, training, education and experience."

The four standards underpinning the statement are awareness of professional ethics, ethical decision making, recognition of limits of competence and recognition of impairment.

3.5.2.1 Awareness of professional ethics

The Code states that psychologists should have a comprehensive awareness of ethics, be familiar with this Code and integrate ethical considerations into their professional practice. The BERA (2004) guidelines 'Responsibilities to Sponsors of Research' expect researchers to make sponsors of research aware of their guidelines. Sheffield University does not specifically reference professional ethics; although the GRP principles reinforce the research culture expectations that research will be conducted with integrity.

3.5.2.2 Ethical decision making

The Code recognises that ethical dilemmas can occur and that psychologists should attempt to resolve these through reflection, supervision and consultation. A process of ethical decision making is outlined, although the Code acknowledges legal obligations may contradict provisions within the Code.

The BERA (2004) guidelines suggest that researchers must evaluate all aspects when conducting research and reach an ethically acceptable position where their actions are considered justifiable and sound. They also recognise that dilemmas will arise and promote their guidelines as a basis for resolution. Sheffield University does not specifically refer to ethical decision making, although does reinforce honesty in terms of the researcher's actions and responses to other researchers, conflicts of interest and openness.

3.5.2.3 Recognising limits of competence

The Code recognises that psychologists should practice within the boundaries of their competence, should have the relevant skills, training and experience to function as a psychologist, adhere to BPS policies relating to continued professional development, and engage in additional professional development, keeping abreast of current innovations and developments in all of the areas within which they work.

Whilst not discussing the concept of competence in detail, the BERA (2004) guidelines, 'Responsibilities to the Community of Educational Researchers', do refer to misconduct, and state that researchers must not bring research into disrepute by undertaking work for which they are not competent. Sheffield University also references research misconduct and stresses accountabilities, training and supervision.

3.5.2.4 Recognising impairment

The Code states that psychologists should monitor their own personal and professional lifestyle, and that if there are health-related or personal difficulties that might impair their professional competence, they should not practice and seek professional help.

3.5.2.4.1 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

Although these four standards are central to the Code, they are not directly relevant to this particular piece of research as the author's competence to undertake research has been closely supervised under the doctoral course auspice.

3.5.3 BPS Key Principle 3: Responsibility

Statement of Values *"Psychologists value their responsibilities to clients, to the general public, and to the profession and science of psychology, including the avoidance of harm and the prevention of misuse or abuse of their contributions to society."*

The standards underpinning this statement are general responsibility, termination and continuity of care, protection of research participants and debriefing of research participants.

3.5.3.1 General responsibility

The Code states that psychologists should avoid harming clients, and that they need to balance any conflict of interests, avoid any misconduct that may bring the profession into disrepute and remain aware of the ethical behaviour of others. The BERA (2004) guidelines 'Responsibilities to the Community of Educational Researchers' do not discuss the concept of responsibility but do refer to misconduct. All researchers must protect the integrity and reputation of educational research by conducting it to the highest standards. Implicit in the guidance and factsheets available from Sheffield University is concern with the protection and promotion of public health. Their ethics review process is designed to ensure that the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of participants are considered, respected and safeguarded.

3.5.3.1.1 Other literature

A number of practical guidelines have been noted in the literature (Cohen et al, 2000, Alderson, 1995, Wellington, 2000, Wellington et al 2005), and in various university ethical policies and guidelines to support the ethical principle of responsibility and the underpinning general statement of values. However, Cohen et al (2000) highlight the dilemmas that researchers face in striking a balance between finding truth and threats to participants' rights and values. Researchers often find themselves in this ethical

dilemma, compounded by unforeseen ethical and moral questions, especially when research involves more vulnerable participants (Cohen et al, 2000).

In addition, Alderson and Morrow (2004) suggest that researchers should pay particular attention to the safeguarding of children and young people's rights to physical and mental integrity, privacy and protection. This should include reporting mechanisms and any subsequent provision needed if any safeguarding issues arise, and should also ensure the safety of the intervention used in the research. Access to children, informed consent (particularly with incapacitated young people), anonymity, confidentiality, deception and withdrawal are also fundamental concepts.

3.5.3.1.2 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

To avoid any allegations of misconduct and to avoid causing any psychological harm, the author has followed Sheffield University's ethical review guidelines.

3.5.3.1.3 Actual ethical dilemmas that occurred

In terms of respect and responsibility, an ethical dilemma arose when the author drafted the participant consent letter. As the participants should be informed why they had been selected for the research – the words statutory assessment and statement of SEN should be referenced in the title. The author discussed the wording of the title of the research with members of the EP service, as she felt the research title itself might be problematic and therefore itself unethical. Considering a similar adult scenario, that of a divorcee receiving a letter stating she had been selected for research on views about divorce, the author imagined herself in this position and felt that such a request could in some instances cause the recipient of the letter distress (depending on the circumstance of the divorce). The author imagined the thoughts and feelings that could go through the minds of the young people and their parents on receiving such a letter cold through the letter box. Although suggestions for a generic title such as 'views and experience of school provision' were made, totally removing any reference to SEN or a statement, the author felt that if this had been the case with the divorce letter mentioning views about marriage but then becoming obvious it was about divorce, the author would have perceived this as being deceived.

3.5.3.2 Termination and continuity of care

The Code states that psychologists should provide information at the first point of contact about terminating professional services, especially where benefits are not apparent and describe alternative referrals where appropriate. The BERA (2004) and Sheffield University guidelines do not consider these points.

3.5.3.2.1 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

The author provided information about withdrawal, the criteria for ending the research, and participants gave feedback on the session using a Likert Scale rating question (1932).

3.5.3.2.2 Actual ethical dilemmas that occurred

The author recognised a potential ethical dilemma that could have meant refusal of a participant despite the consent form being completed. The situation was ultimately resolved through discussion with the parent and young person involved, and proof-reading the relevant sections of the thesis to eliminate any possible identifying information about the young person and school.

3.5.3.3 Protection of research participants

The Code states that in all circumstances psychologists should consider the ethical implications, psychological consequences and all aspects of potential risks to research participants' psychological well-being, taking into account all diversity and equality factors referenced in the standard of general respect. The research should be considered from the standpoint of all participants. Foreseeable threats to their psychological well-being, health, values or dignity should be eliminated. They should inform participants of the actions taken to minimise risk and seek advice if unsure. Participants should be informed about their rights to withdraw and inducements should be avoided.

The BERA (2004) guidelines 'Responsibilities to Participants' also recognise the participant's rights to voluntary informed consent, their right to withdraw, the ethic of respect and avoidance of deception, and recognise that participants may experience distress, emotional harm or detriment as part of the research process. The use of incentives to encourage participation must be commensurate with good sense.

Sheffield University also references the respect and safeguarding considerations required as part of their ethics procedures. Their guidelines state that where children and young people are involved in research, it should be confirmed that the research results cannot be obtained from any other group of participants. Advice provided on completing the research ethics application form includes the issue of offering financial compensation to participants.

3.5.3.3.1 Other literature

Cohen et al (2000) and Alderson and Morrow (2004) suggest that researchers should pay particular attention to ensuring the safety, protection and well-being of the children and young people involved in research, including the safety of the intervention to be used in the proposed research. To minimise any risk of harm from participation, risk assessments need to be carried out (Lovett, 1996). Researchers have a moral and ethical obligation to equalise the power relationship and to protect research participants from exploitation (Tindall, 1999) and deception (BPS, 2000), both during the research and after its conclusion. The possible impact on children or young people (e.g. any signs of distress or reluctance to continue in the research) must be addressed. Mechanisms must be in place to deal effectively with any issues that may arise. Ongoing discussions must consider whether they have been disturbed in any way by their involvement in the research, and whether they require any additional support to manage this disturbance. If necessary, closure of the research should be considered (Alderson and Morrow, 2004).

Wellington et al (2005) also suggest that we need to make a distinction between the considerations relating to general principles of action and those relating to the dispositions and character of the researcher, and that there is a need for each research situation to be considered in its own right. Wellington et al (2005 p.104) argue that researchers have a basic human moral responsibility towards the research participants and question whether researchers are 'doing as they would be done by' (p.105), providing prompt questions to be asked within ethical practice such as whether the researcher could be accused of 'rape research' (Lather, 1986), getting what they want and then clearing off (p.105). It is recognised that risks may be hard to predict and that, even if research is approved, there may still be others who are upset by it. Feelings of coercion, shame or emotional intrusion cannot be measured, although they may be so intense that they cannot be expressed, and so researchers remain unaware of the distress caused. Researchers need to respond sensitively to anxiety, distress or reticence. The main value in discussing risk is to consider which risks might be prevented or reduced, how possible distress can be avoided and how to respond to people who do become distressed (Alderson, 2000).

Where research is ethically sensitive, Cohen et al (2000) argue that many factors need to be taken into account, and that these will vary from situation to situation or according to the resilience of the young people involved. The benefits of undertaking a pilot study have been noted (Cohen et al, 2000), to reduce and eliminate risks and to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the research. Madill et al (2005) also advocate a

pilot study's usefulness as a safety mechanism, suggesting that all students should conduct a pilot study or interview to allow the supervisor to check the student's reaction to the research topic, their interpersonal sensitivity and skills in using an enquiring technique. If a pilot study is not feasible, Cohen et al (2000) suggest arranging 'scouting forays' to assess possible problems and risks.

The ethical considerations surrounding participatory research (Christensen and James, 2000, Lewis and Lyndsay, 2000), direct work to elicit 'the voice of the child' (Lewis, 2001), and studies on children with disabilities are noted (Lewis, 1995, Davis et al, 2000). Although, a number of tools and techniques are now being used to illuminate the educational world of children and young people with SEN, Maxwell (2006), Murray (2002) and Gersch et al (1996) argue that the principles and philosophy of participation are more important than the actual techniques used. Selecting the appropriate method for the research will depend upon a number of factors (BERA, 2004). The appropriateness and practical application of the research methods used to elicit views must ensure diversity and inclusiveness of approaches, particularly when working with children from minority ethnic groups, those with sensory and physical disabilities and young children. For those with learning difficulties and low incidence SEN, Lewis et al (2004) argue that there is a need for greater rigour and more critical evaluation of the various methods used to elicit views, as currently there is little evidence on the credibility and reliability of the methods used. Felce (2002) notes that the enthusiasm for children and young people to give their views often goes beyond their language and conceptual abilities, especially for those with severe and profound needs, and that policy imperatives may tend to assume the ease of eliciting views and feelings without questioning the appropriateness of the elicitation methods.

3.5.3.3.2 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

This standard is crucial to the successful conduct of this research and therefore more detail has been provided. The subject matter is a particularly sensitive area that has required careful planning and preparation. Regular written submissions and tutorials with university tutors ensured appropriate preparation took place before the start of direct work with the young people. A presentation was also made to the doctoral community cohort as part of the university's ethics review. This provided opportunities for 'learning community' feedback (Wellington et al, 2005), which was then integrated into the final ethical review submitted to and approved by the university.

Due to the potential vulnerability of participants who had been the subject of a statement of SEN, a pilot study did take place. This identified factors that required

further development, discussed further in Chapter 4. The research design also included an assessment of the risks for the young people involved in the study (Appendix 2). Other areas considered under this standard included informal consultation with other peripheral stakeholders within the SEN, disability and equality arenas across the LA, to identify equality and diversity factors to be considered during the course of the study design and as part of the risk and impact assessment process, to avoid bias and to comply with equality and diversity legislation (Race Relations Amendment Act, 2000). The objective was to ensure that the research complied with this legislation.

The author was aware of her responsibility to detect and remove any undesirable consequences that could arise for participants, recognising the potential that all research involving children and young people has to cause pain, discomfort or stress (physical and/or psychological). As questions of a sensitive and personal nature were to be asked (e.g. questions on their SEN and labelling), the author ensured that the initial information about the research, the administration of the semi-structured questionnaires and cultural web analysis were delivered by her personally, to ensure that the procedures did not entail any risk to the psychological well-being of the young people involved. The research design, the use of the University of Sheffield guidelines and participant information sheet addressed the need to provide information on potential discomfort, fear and other foreseeable risks. This ensured that the young people received accurate information before deciding to participate. They also received information on how to contact the author within a reasonable time period before participation, should any unforeseen stress, related questions or concerns arise. The author explained the plan of action that would be taken should the young person experience any discomfort or stress, and reassured them on the safeguarding of their rights to physical and mental integrity, privacy and protection. A system was developed to monitor and report on any safeguarding issues that might arise, including a record of all contact with participants and their parents, detailing their responses.

Where a young person appeared to be more sensitive, the author had alternative strategies prepared for discussing possible feelings of indignity, undermining of self-esteem etc. As the research would not benefit the children and young people directly but might serve 'the public good' (other children and young people), this fact was shared with them. Potential 'public good' benefits accruing from the research were described in terms as leading to improved knowledge of young peoples' views of SEN to inform policy and practice, and the opportunity to improve the statutory assessment process. For their individual benefits, the author described how they could take satisfaction in having made a contribution to research in the field of education and SEN

and having provided a greater insight into the area under research. The author also stated that the research was in connection with her Doctorate in Educational Psychology and tried not to claim more than the research merited.

The author avoided bias, coercion or any inappropriate inducements to persuade young people to participate in the research. The information given to the participants made it clear that no inducements would be given, apart from reasonable travel expenses. As it is usual to close research with young people by thanking them for their contribution with some form of small token (Alderson and Morrow, 2004), the author purchased £10.00 gift vouchers for all participants and presented them with a 'Thank You' card at the end of the research.

3.5.3.3.3 Actual ethical dilemmas that occurred

Following one of the interviews, the author had asked the young person to rate the interview on a scale of 1-10 (10 meaning they had enjoyed the session very much) and was given a response of five on a scale of ten. When asked what would have made it six, the young person replied "you could have brought some chocolate". Although this was laughed off, the author had to explain it was not allowed to offer anything that could be seen as bribing the participants.

3.5.3.4 Debriefing of research participants

The Code states that psychologists should carefully debrief participants at the end of their involvement, informing them of the outcomes of the research and arranging support should any outcomes cause distress. These points are also considered further in the BERA guidelines 'responsibilities to participants', suggesting that copies of the research reports be made available to them or give website references to reports. The practical significance of the research and findings must also be communicated clearly and in language appropriate to the intended audience.

3.5.3.4.1 Other literature

Detailed debriefing and discussion with the child or young person following the research is strongly advised to support the closure of research (Cohen et al, 2000). Opportunities for discussing how their views have been incorporated into the research are important and may provide feedback on the accuracy of their contribution. Feedback on the research findings in an age and ability appropriate manner is also important (Alderson and Morrow, 2004).

3.5.3.4.2 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

Time was spent with the young people at the end of the interviews to thank them for their participation and contribution, to answer any questions and to reassure them that they did well and ensure they had a sense of well-being. The author provided the participants with answers necessary to complete their understanding of the nature of the research. When writing up the research, the author took into account the sensitivity of the topics and showed regard for the young people's feelings. Discussion of the individual interviews was exercised with caution. Where parents requested feedback, this was first checked with the young person and feedback confined to the section that their child had contributed to. The section was provided to both the child and parent for verification, comments and amendments in draft form.

Although initially the participants were to be offered a copy of the final thesis (on request), the author demonstrated common-sensical ethics (Cohen et al, 2000), recognising that offering the full thesis was impractical. This was for a number of reasons including the size of the thesis, photocopying costs, the language used for its primary academic audience, and the possible residual literacy difficulties of the young people involved. Other methods were considered, such as sending an electronic copy or offering to read aloud their contribution to the research and the findings from the research. The author also offered to meet them and their parents again to discuss the findings on an individual basis or send them a copy of the transcript for approval. This offer was taken up by three participants, one requested to see the full transcript which was returned with amendments, the author met with two other participants and a copy of the cultural web and the section that they had contributed to was provided and talked through. Should the question of publication of the research arise at a later date, it was agreed with the young people that permission would be sought from them.

3.5.4 BPS Key Principle 4: Integrity

Statement of Values: "Psychologists value honesty, accuracy, clarity and fairness in their interactions with all persons, and seek to promote integrity in all facets of their scientific and professional endeavours."

The four standards underpinning the statement are honesty and accuracy, avoidance of exploitation and conflicts of interest, maintenance of personal boundaries and addressing ethical misconduct.

3.5.4.1 Honesty and accuracy

The Code states that psychologists should provide information about their professional qualifications and experience, ensuring that these are not misrepresented and accurately reflect their professional service products, costs, professional conclusions, and research findings etc, to avoid misleading the public. The BERA (2004) guidelines do not discuss these points in terms of the general public, but refer to responsibilities to the community of educational researchers with respect to misconduct.

3.5.4.1.1 Other literature

In the Code the terms honesty and accuracy replace the word deception, described as the withholding of information or the misleading of participants (BPS, 2000). Where deception is suspected, appropriate consultation must precede the investigation. Armstrong et al (1993) assert that psychologists can be under pressure not to make honest recommendations (professional conclusions) as they have to consider the realities of the SEN provision available and balance the different, possibly conflicting, interests of each client group (child, parents, schools, LA). Moreover, the ambiguity of their role can lead to both ethical and professional dilemmas that may affect their ability to represent the interests of any or all of their clients. Contradictions in this professional role may also lead to the child's perspective being disregarded.

3.5.4.1.2 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

Although not directly relevant to the research, information about the author's previous professional qualifications or experience would have been made available on request. With regard to professional conclusions and research findings, the pilot study informed the research and the participant information sheet (Appendix 1) demonstrated the accuracy of the information provided.

3.5.4.1.3 Actual ethical dilemmas that occurred

There are moral obligations for the researcher to ensure that young people and colleagues are not used inadvertently as supplementary to the themes in the research. It is essential that researchers are reflective in their practice (Wellington et al, 2005). In this instance, as the author was a member of the LA Pupil Panel (the group that determines if statements should cease), this created an ethical dilemma, as potential research participants could be discussed at this Forum. The author was aware that she could be viewed as influencing decisions in order to ensure the 'right' participant(s). Although colleagues on the panel were unaware of this research, did the author have a moral obligation to share this with the Panel, knowing this could compromise the

anonymity of the participants? However, this dilemma did not materialise as the author was unable to attend a number of Panel dates due to other work pressures.

An additional dilemma that arose was where, having identified potential interviewees through the random selection process, the author was unable to obtain up-to-date telephone numbers for some of the young people despite accessing the central databases and obtaining the files. The difficulties in getting this information resulted in the author contacting schools direct under the 'guise' of checking out as part of an audit trail, the accuracy of the log sheet details in EPS files in preparation for the JAR inspection. Although this yielded results in two cases, the author chose not to contact those pupils, due to the deception element. This could have resulted in a smaller sample than anticipated, and highlights the difficulties in trying to undertake research with young people whilst maintaining confidentiality.

3.5.4.2 Avoiding exploitation and conflicts of interest

The Code states that psychologists should remain aware of the problems that may result from dual or multiple relationships (e.g. supervising trainees to whom they are married), avoid forming a relationship that may impair professional objectivity and not abuse professional relationships to advance their sexual, personal, financial or other interests.

3.5.4.3 Maintaining professional boundaries

The Code states that psychologists should not be involved in any form of sexual or romantic relationship with persons to whom they are providing professional services. It should be made clear that agreed harassment procedures exist.

3.5.4.4 Addressing ethical misconduct

The Code states that psychologists should challenge colleagues who appear to have engaged in ethical misconduct and/or consider bringing these allegations to the attention of the appropriate body.

3.5.4.4.1 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified in sections 3.5.4.2, 3.5.4.3 and 3.5.4.4

These standards were not relevant to this particular piece of research.

3.5.4.5 Other ethical considerations

There are a number of further principles identified within the literature which, although they could be technically covered under the generic headings within the Code, deserve consideration in their own right.

3.5.4.6 Power differentials and relationships

Power differentials and relationships are closely interwoven with the safety and protection of participants. Murray (2004), Clough and Barton (1995), Foucault (1977), Billington (1995, 2000) and Billington and Pomerantz (2004) all highlight the power discourse in operation. As children and young people with SEN have had limited involvement and are passive participants in research (Armstrong, 1995), there is a need for these more vulnerable children to be protected. Parents of children with SEN also experience disempowerment (Todd, 2000) when in contact with professionals. Attempts to address the powerlessness of children relative to adults include matching researchers and children in terms of gender and ethnicity, the use of citizen and peer advocacy (Atkinson, 1999), and the use of young researchers to collect data, including those who themselves have SEN (National Children's Bureau, 2003).

Marshall (1984) and Sikes (2005) argue that the aim of qualitative research is to make participants' experiences visible and to give them a voice, as the researcher is accountable to the participants. However, this accountability has nothing to do with the purpose of the research, as publishers of the research control the representation of information and therefore published research findings may become distorted, and not accurately reflect the participant's contribution. Accountability issues are often neglected within the field of research. Researchers using techniques such as discourse analysis and narrative accounts (Wellington, 2000) that identify codes, rules and signs in speech and text that highlight issues of power and interpretation (Billington, 1995) and the technology of power (Foucault, 1977), must consider their position in this discourse.

Alderson (2000) acknowledges that informed and willing consent helps to ensure that participants are not coerced or tricked into taking part in research, and that this is a means of setting a contract between researchers and participants. However, she argues that a contract assumes a relationship between equal partners and, when researchers have much more relevant knowledge and often more power, the relationship is seldom equal, however much researchers inform and defer to their respondents. Providing opportunities for participants to contact the researcher during

the research, by acknowledging their ownership of the material and providing copy transcripts may help reduce such power differentials (Alderson, 2000).

3.5.4.6.1 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

The author was aware that it was her responsibility to detect any power differentials through her accountability to the university, the LA and the participants involved. To reduce the power differentials, the author assessed the reactions from the parents and young people when initial permission was sought to interview them, and before the interviews asked them to consider their feelings and self-identify any problems, such as feelings of anxiety about the prospect of being interviewed. The author also observed how the young people acted and behaved immediately before the interview started and whilst the interview was underway. The young people were asked for feedback following the interview session and completed a Likert Scale question (1932), rating the interview on a scale of 1-10 (10 meaning they had enjoyed the session very much) to monitor any unforeseen negative effects or misconceptions. They were also informed again that they could withdraw themselves from the research at any time, even during any debriefing or feedback sessions, and that any data obtained would be destroyed. They were able to contact the author before participation and following their involvement to discuss any concerns. Every attempt was made to accurately reflect their views.

3.5.4.7 The setting and context

Where and when the research is conducted, what questions are asked and who asks the questions will all impact on the outcome of the research and may introduce research bias (James, 2004). Negotiation about the time of day, the planning, preparation, and appropriateness of the venue for the interviews (home, school or other settings), the quality of the venue (including privacy) and the format of questions may all lessen the effects of these influences.

3.5.4.7.1 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

The author discussed with the young people the venue, timings, etc, that they were most comfortable with.

3.5.4.7.2 Actual ethical dilemmas that occurred

This did create another ethical dilemma, as one young person asked if the interview could take place in school time as he/she did not like school. He/she also indicated that his/her mother would provide a sick note so that the full morning or afternoon could be missed. The author's response to this was to arrange for the interview to take place at

lunchtime, with a proviso that the mother would write a note saying that he/she may be late for registration. This also placed the author in a difficult position, as she had to arrange to pick the student up from school, outside the school premises and drive him/her to the agreed interview venue. Careful planning with the parent and student had to take place to avoid the student getting into a wrong vehicle with a stranger, so the author's vehicle details and physical description were given.

Another interview took place with the mother in attendance although the young person had agreed to this. It was felt by the author that her presence may have inhibited the participant's responses. Following the interview, the mother stated that she felt it would have been better if her child had had a copy of the interview schedule in advance 'so they could swot up on it'. The author explained that it was not a test and the purpose of the semi-structured interview was to avoid anxiety on the part of the pupil. The parent still felt that her proposal would have been better for her child.

3.5.4.8 Representing views fairly

It is recognised that children or young people rarely have their views documented as they intended (Harding, 2006, May, 2005, Armstrong, 2003, Billington, 1995, 2000). When professionals, including educational psychologists, report on or try to summarise pupil views, words may be taken out of their context and reconstructed from the adult's own perspective, experiences and language. This can give a different emphasis and priority to what was actually intended, and may lead to inaccuracies in how the voice of the child is represented (Harding, 2006, May, 2004, Armstrong, 2003, Billington, 1995, 2000).

Research undertaken by Harding (2006) identified that although a number of techniques within one EPS were used to record the child's views as part of their year 9 transition review, the EPs acknowledged that although they sometimes quoted the child's views, they also tended to interpret or summarise the child's views, extrapolating what they thought were the key points relating to how they perceived the issues. However, the inadequacies of brief interviews as part of the assessment were acknowledged and attempts to rectify them sought. Harding (2006) also confirms the observations by Armstrong et al (1995), who in analysing EP interviews with children and subsequent reports by the EPs to the LA, recorded considerable use of psychometric measures for assessing children, with little emphasis on techniques for accessing their perspectives on the difficulties experienced.

3.5.4.8.1 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

The young people were invited to meet the author for a second session to discuss how their views had been recorded. They were also asked if they wanted their parent(s) to attend and how the author could give feedback to their parents without undermining their confidential responses.

3.5.4.9 Safety and protection of the researcher

Although not acknowledged by the Code or BERA (2004), Sheffield University's Ethical Guidance and Principles of Safety and Well-Being (2005) emphasise the need for researchers to be protected from harm and to be familiar with appropriate safety codes of practice and guidance. Occupational risk assessments should be undertaken where research is conducted off educational premises or at a participant's home, out of core office time, with vulnerable participants or participants of the opposite sex. Where research is carried out with children and young people in the researcher's own LA, as part of a university course requirement, the researcher should discuss their own safety and protection with their line manager. 'Sensitive' subject topics such as illegal activity, issues associated with stigma and discrimination and studies into cultural, ethical, racial, political, religious or sexual issues may require a more detailed risk assessment. There should be an action plan in place for the researcher should a child or young person inform them of an illegal issue/practice(s) not related to the research project. In the guidelines for supervision of qualitative research projects produced by Madill et al (2005), they also recommend that research students notify someone of their whereabouts when collecting data outside university premises, despite the risk of compromising anonymity.

3.5.4.9.1 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

As the author was conducting this research as part of the requirement for Sheffield University and this research involved interviewing young people within her LA and therefore known to the EPS, without compromising confidentiality, the author discussed safety and protection with her line manager. The risk assessment matrix (Appendix 2) also considered this issue. The author anticipated disclosures that could occur during the research (e.g. bullying, abuse). Had this occurred, the author's course of action would have been to follow the LA's Child Protection procedures. The author had familiarised herself with current child protection procedures by attending a refresher training course as part of the risk assessment.

3.5.4.10 Responsibilities to the sponsors of research

Although not acknowledged by the Code, BERA (2004) identifies this as one of its fundamental principles, stressing the expectation that researchers make sponsors aware of its ethical guidelines. Initial proposals for consultation or research work with young people need to take into consideration the purpose of the research, the intended outcomes, the costs versus benefits ratio, appropriateness of the research design in relation to its objectives, the statistical methodology to be employed (including sample size calculation), access and storage of personal data and standards to achieve the educational aims and objectives (Wellington et al, 2005, Cohen et al, 2000).

3.5.4.10.1 The author's response to the ethical challenges identified

The author was financially sponsored by the LA in which she works. The LA also facilitated the research by enabling access to data and participants. Ongoing dialogue took place with the author's line manager (effectively the sponsor) on the timeframe for completing the research (as part of the four year doctoral programme), and agreeing the research subject. The author believes that she has fulfilled her responsibility to the LA by completing the research to the highest possible standard. Limitations of the small scale and qualitative nature of this research and the likelihood that the findings may not be generalised or replicable were stressed to the sponsor.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter describes the research frameworks placed on research. It explains the methodology used to collect and analyse data in order to answer the two research questions.

1. What are the perceptions of young people about their involvement in the process of statutory assessment, the issuing of a statement, the benefits of the support allocated to them by the statement and the subsequent 'ceasing' of that statement?
2. What are their perceptions of the SEN culture?

It highlights the challenges inherent in undertaking research with children and young people, and describes in detail different methodologies and their advantages and limitations. The selected methodology is described as the author attempts to obtain the young people's perspectives and construction of their SEN world. The research design, subsequent interview schedule and framework, following the completion of a pilot study, are referenced. The chapter also describes the cultural web used in this research as a tool for consulting and eliciting views from young people in terms of their perspectives on their SEN, the statutory assessment and SEN experiences.

A critique of the methodology chosen is outlined in Chapter 8.

4.2 Research Frameworks

Current literature is dominated by two principal frameworks placed on psychological research – the quantitative approach or the qualitative approach. The quantitative approach stems from the positivist paradigm. This advocates that the methods and principles of the natural sciences can be applied to human behaviour (Wellington, 2000). In contrast, qualitative researchers tend to believe that social phenomena only exist as an interpretation or construction of social action and interaction (Robson, 2000).

Greig et al (2007) summarise these principal theoretical frameworks for research with children:-

- **Positivism:** If the research philosophy reflects the principles of positivism, the researcher will adopt the philosophical stance of the natural scientist, assuming the role of objective analyst, making detached interpretations about data that has been collected in a value-free objective manner. The focus is upon a highly structured

methodology and quantifiable observations leading to some form of statistical analysis. The researcher remains distinct from the subject of the research and does not influence it. The positivist assumptions about the nature of children are that the same scientific procedures that are used on fossils can also be applied to children, and that they can be objectively observed, controlled and measured.

- **Constructivism:** Criticises the view of the positivist tradition, arguing that the business and social world is far too complex to be analysed in the same form as that of the natural sciences. It critiques the view that generalisations can be made, as all people are individuals and are therefore unable to be compared due to their uniqueness. Children in particular are seen as subjective, contextual and socially self-determining with relationships that are dynamic across individuals, context and time. The constructivist researcher attempts to understand how the real worlds of children operate by entering those worlds and describing and analysing the contextualised social phenomena found there.

4.3 The selection of a methodology for this research

The aim of this research is to find out from young people what it was like to have been the subject of a statement of SEN and therefore part of the SEN culture. As the author was interested in the real world experiences of the young people, the intention was to look at their collective experience applied to a situation (in this case the statutory assessment process and SEN culture), to make sense of it and to inform a future course of action. In order to obtain subjective accounts from young people about their experiences of the world within a specific SEN context, the author chose to adopt a social constructivist position and to use qualitative methods and techniques to gather data and for data analysis.

The data collection was primarily by the use of semi-structured interviews incorporating the use of a cultural web model (Johnson and Scholes, 1999). Details of how the semi-structured interviews and the cultural web were operationalised in this research are discussed in detail later in this chapter (sections 4.4 and 4.9 respectively). The primary purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to allow the young people involved in the study the opportunity to describe and discuss the SEN culture that they had been a part of. Compared to other methods, interviews are relatively economical in terms of time and resources.

Although less common in qualitative research (Silverman, 2006), the author chose to use a content analysis (thematic) approach to enable the identification of key themes present in the data. This would allow a 'coding' or 'themed' framework to be put in

place and for all the data to be collated, analysed and cross-checked in an unobtrusive way (Robson, 2002). Moreover, Silverman (2006) argues that it is crucial that these codes or categories are understood by the researcher in order for the 'end products', the participants 'stories', to be told (p.20).

When using a thematic analysis approach, themes can be identified relevant to the subject or area under research. In this instance, themes that were relevant (in the author's experience) to the area of SEN and the young people's journey through the process of a statutory assessment were: beginnings, participation, SEN provision and support, relationships, endings and labels. Questions were drafted in a manner designed to elicit narratives (beginning with "Who...What...How...Can you tell me etc?)." and linked to the themes; for example, with reference to the theme of beginnings, one of the questions asked of the young people was "Who first told you that you may have SEN?"

The young people's responses were tape-recorded and transcribed. When combined with audio recording, qualitative interview studies are seen as a reliable record of naturally occurring interaction within the interview, which researchers can return to as they develop new hypotheses (Silverman, 2006). The quality of the data obtained through transcription allows for accurate recording of the interview and provides an objective record. The interviewer's contribution can also be recorded and reflected upon. The use of data extracts which support the researcher's argument and contrary evidence can also be reviewed. Although various transcript conventions can be used in extracts, the author chose to not to apply these conventions and focus on the bare text. The transcripts were analysed, and where these responses related to the pre-determined themes, they were collated under the relevant theme.

As qualitative interview studies are often conducted with small samples, 'authenticity' rather than sample size is often highlighted as an issue in qualitative research (Silverman, 2006). As the author was aware that the population of young people who had had statements that ceased was small, the usefulness of interviews as an approach was considered to be the most appropriate for this research and would enable the author to demonstrate the 'authenticity' of the data.

Silverman (2006) also suggests that no special skills are required for qualitative interviewing, as interviews are collaboratively produced with interviewees as active participants, and as such no single interviewing style is best. An advantage of using a semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions is that they provide the

participants with the freedom to report on their experiences (Robson, 2002). Although there are pre-determined, open-ended questions, the order and wording can be changed, explanations given, and additional questions included, or others omitted, depending on the interviewer's perception of how the interview is going (Robson, 2002). Interviewing as a method was chosen because the author wished to look at the characteristics of the SEN culture using two different techniques (a semi-structured interview and a cultural web analysis), to explore young people's experiences and perceptions of this culture in an informal, interactive style. This method allows an interview guide with key questions to be asked, and responses to be recorded. Additional themes that become evident during the interview can be added to the framework. Interviews have some structure and also flexibility, they enable interview frameworks to be piloted before the main research is undertaken. In this research, piloting would be required as part of the ethical considerations and safeguarding process for the participants. Piloting would also provide feedback on the structure of the questionnaire, its accessibility in terms of the pupil's understanding, comprehension of the questions and completion time. The author also chose to interview the participants personally to enable the monitoring any physiological or psychological changes (e.g. in terms of their body language and interactions etc), to maintain their anonymity and to fulfil requirements of the BPS 'Code of Ethics and Conduct' (2006).

4.4 Research methodologies considered

There were a number of potential methodological approaches that were considered by the author for this research. Some of the advantages and limitations of these approaches are described below, with reasons why the author believed they were not suitable in this instance.

Questionnaires are generally quantitative, can be highly specific to open-ended probing, and are a cost-effective method of gathering data. They are usually designed for counting and rating of responses and analysed using computerised quantitative methods, although the issue for researchers is one of fitness for purpose. However, they often run the risk of leading or influencing the interviewee, they require rigorous analysis and a degree of functional literacy. The use of questionnaires with young people with SEN, who may have residual literacy difficulties, may limit responses and opportunities for elaboration and was therefore felt to be inappropriate.

Interviews range on a continuum from highly structured or directed to unstructured or undirected. Structured interviews allow participants to be involved in the design of the schedules. They also offer a variety of formality and structure for both interviewee and

interviewer. Schedules can be piloted to ensure the appropriateness of questions, the prompts required and to ensure comprehensiveness. Asking questions in the third person avoids 'right' answers or pupils feeling threatened by direct questioning. However, they are time-consuming as they can only involve one interviewee at a time, and the child or young person may not fully understand or misinterpret questions. In addition, the researcher may not fully understand participants' responses, and there may be a power imbalance, i.e. the interviewer is in an expert role, whereas the interviewee is in an answer finder role, with limited say in the direction of the interview. The interview is inevitably an artificial situation where the interpersonal qualities and skills of the interviewer are crucial.

Semi-structured (focused) interviews enable a variety of techniques to be used as a basis for exploring views such as writing, pictorial, play activities, video and role play. A combination of questions can be prepared in advance with opportunities for prompts to maximise flexibility in interactions with participants, facilitate rapport and enable the interview to be more natural and interactive. Participants can also direct the interview to some extent. There are also opportunities for elaboration of responses. The interviews can be analysed using, for example, qualitative thematic analysis of data (Cohen and Manion, 1994). This transcript familiarity enables emerging themes and inter-relationships (clusters, super-ordinates) to be identified (Smith, 1995b).

They therefore need to be reliably recorded (e.g. on tape as well as the making of field notes) (Robson, 2002). However, tape recording interviews may inhibit responses. In addition, transcription is time-consuming and the quality of the recording can be variable. A further limitation is that the interviewer's personal interpretation of the data, through their own unique set of personal and social constructs, will inevitably effect the outcomes, meaning that interpretation and analysis of the data may not be identical or replicable. Content analysis also has disadvantages, and researcher bias is always a factor (Robson, 2002). Variation between researchers may identify different emergent and contrasting inter-relationships between themes, and they may use different sections of the transcripts to demonstrate these themes. Generally, question-answer formats may be inappropriate for younger children, as they may acquiesce to the suggestions of others, so issues of eliciting reliable and valid information must therefore be considered (Grove et al, 2000). Despite some of the limitations described above, the author believed a semi-structured interview would be the most appropriate tool to link the data gathering exercise i.e. the application of thematic content analysis and the cultural web analytic tool.

Life histories, biographies, life story, narrative approaches, storying accounts and methodologies have developed more recently as tools to be used in qualitative research to enable researchers to become critical social psychologists and reflexive practitioners (Wellington, 2000, Sikes, 2005, Silverman 2006). These tools can provide unique insights into the development and life experiences of a person, through the researcher's attempts to create a sense of feel and place, and so convince the reader that they are there (Sikes, 2005). Language, the medium through which social life is maintained, has been absent from many studies in psychology (Bannister et al, 1999).

Although the subjectivity of the researcher must be acknowledged, these methodologies provide tools for examining structures, operators and power in policy and practice, through the analysis of how stories are used to create, organise and communicate identity and personal meaning. They also assist the exploration of the multiple contexts which make up the lives of the participants in these systems, identifying the risk of confusion between the roles of participant observer, interviewer or consultant (Armstrong, 2003). There may be tensions between the multi-dimensional individual with different rules in each context and, as a result, different interpretations of the world. Life history narrative is rooted in the researcher's understanding and representation of past individual experiences and stories, enabling other people's stories to be made sense of. However, the reliability of these tools can be questioned as they elicit *past* experiences and perspectives. Colonisation (Cohen et al, 2000) places a particular interpretation on the ethical relationships involved in the acquisition and use of stories. It assumes that the voice of the author is the medium through which power is reproduced. Although interested in developing this area of work, as the study involved young people who were potentially vulnerable because of the nature of the research, the author believed that the use of a cultural web with a visual frame of reference (described in more detail in 4.9) would allow the young people's stories to be told in a 'safer', albeit constrained way, but with opportunities for elaboration.

Case studies allow triangulation through the combination of mixed methods, including the spectrum of observations, researcher interviews (semi-structured to unstructured), questionnaires, analysis of documentary materials, attendance at meetings or other data collection techniques (Wellington, 2000). Case studies can reflect the characteristics of the organisation and examine relationships, personalities and roles of individuals to provide a richness, immediacy and graphic quality (Hartley, 1995). They also provide opportunities to explore issues in-depth, and in their context enable theory and construct development to occur. For example, personal construct techniques (Kelly, 1955, Ravenette, 1997) were used by Maxwell (2006) in case studies with junior school

children on the SEN register to elicit views on their education. However, case studies may lack rigour, validity and reliability, do not allow generalisation and are labour intensive (Wellington, 2000). Although case studies allow the researcher to generate hypotheses, build theory and gather a complete set of data using a variety of methods, in this research the focus was on the data gathered through the semi-structured interview, incorporating the cultural web.

A focus group is defined by Robson (2002) as a group interview on a specific topic that could yield qualitative data. An advantage of focus groups is that children and young people may feel more relaxed talking in groups than responding to direct questions in an interview situation (Harker, 2002). There may also be opportunities for group interaction which could produce potentially value added data (Woolfson et al, 2006). Disadvantages summarised by Wellington (2000) include reduced researcher control and increased ethical issues to be considered. The author had initially intended to hold a focus group comprising a number of young people who previously had statements of SEN. However, the author identified difficulties in accessing these young people and bringing them together in a mutually safe and agreed venue, together with problems in ensuring their confidentiality. As the schools would have had to be involved and transport provided etc, these ethical considerations took priority over the additional information that could have been provided via this forum.

Discourse analysis has been described as an emerging, developing and constructivist methodology influenced by symbolic interactions and conversational analysis (Wood and Kroger, 2000). Meaning is acquired through the use of symbolic communication in language games and ways of life, rather than through the relationship between symbols and external reality. The common basis for the diverse forms of discourse analysis is that the discourses used to understand the world are the products of culturally situated communications, and vary over time as a result of social changes. Discourse analysis provides a tool for analysing the language and social mechanisms of individuals or groups, and is an appropriate methodology for use with children and young people (Billington, 2002). It seeks to explore the organisation of talk and everyday explanations and to understand what children say in relation to what it is possible for them to say and what it is possible for adults to hear them say. This approach also encourages reflexive practice, although its subjectivity is formed from the outcome of discursive practice, and there are a number of different approaches to choose from to analyse and interpret spoken discourse and text influenced by different disciplines. This method could have been selected; however, the author considered that this would prove problematic due to time constraints.

The model chosen by the author was on a continuum providing a middle ground framework of a semi-structured interview and use of the cultural web. The cultural web provided a visual model for the young people. Although it provided a template with an imposed structure, it was transparent and explained explicitly to them. It provided a framework for them to understand the research in terms of their SEN. The young people also had options and could choose how they interpreted the dimensions (stories, symbols etc). For example, when asked about the stories surrounding SEN, they could choose whether they reflected on their own SEN or how they saw other young people with SEN.

As the research questions concern the young people's descriptions of their SEN experiences and their feelings about the statutory assessment process, the author believed that interview methods were the most suitable means of gathering information in this study. This would allow the researcher to question the young people involved about things that could not be directly observed e.g.s. feelings, thoughts, meanings attached to what happens around them and to them.

The author has taken responsibility for most of the key decision making processes in this thesis, in that she formulated the research questions and themes (borne out of experience and knowledge), and made decisions regarding the sample population size etc. She also acknowledges that this places her as central in the data gathering process. The author also retained control over the reporting procedures and data selection. Clearly, therefore, whilst this study is designed to access pupil voices, there are ethical, logistic and practical limits to totally eliciting the pupil voice generally imposed by the methodologies and structures adopted. Therefore in this research, the student perceptions are unavoidably seen through the lens of one particular researcher.

Although the interview framework and cultural web would allow their voices to be heard, the author acknowledges that the frameworks within this model could also be perceived as constraining and controlling their voices.. However, the author wanted to explore whether the unique use of a business management tool (the cultural web) could be developed as a tool to be used in qualitative research to enable researchers to elicit the voice of the child.

4.5 Research design and timetable

A Gantt Chart (1919) was drawn up, identifying actions required and specific milestones for the research (Figure 2). A risk assessment (Appendix 2) was also undertaken to identify any potential risks that could occur. As a result of this, the author anticipated ways in which the research might be delayed and delay prevention strategies were drawn up (Appendix 3).

Figure 2 – Research design, framework and timescale

	Jan-06	Feb-06	Mar-06	Apr-06	May-06	Jun-06	Jul-06	Aug-06	Sep-06	Oct-06	Nov-06	Dec-06	Jan-07	Feb-07
Presentation of proposal to the Sheffield research community Research proposal accepted														
Sample identified from SEN 'A' List														
Participant consent letter and consent form drafted														
Risk assessment matrix drafted and informal discussions undertaken re child protection and diversity and safeguarding issues														
Risk assessment matrix completed														
Child Protection and Diversity training completed														
Telephone contacts established														
Letter sent to young people/parents														
Interviews														
Interview transcriptions (in their entirety) to avoid over refinement														
Analysis of data														
Further literature review														
Feedback to young people/parents														
First draft written														

4.5.1 Identifying the participants

The author identified the following criteria for selecting the young people for this research.

- The statement had ceased in the eighteen months prior to starting the research. This timeframe was used as it would be difficult under data protection to get the details of those who were no longer in school. In addition, the author wanted the young people's memories of the events leading to and after the statement had ceased to be relatively fresh in their minds.
- The young people's CoP status - having previously been in receipt of a statement of SEN, it was also likely that these pupils were still placed on the graduated level of response of the CoP, again enabling easier access for the author to obtain details of these young people from LA databases.
- The majority of young people with statements in the author's LA have statements for SpLD as the main category of need. Therefore, as the majority of young people who had their statements ceased had had a statement for SpLD, it was decided to draw participants for the research from this wider population. There were fewer numbers of children and young people who did not have SpLD. There would also be some homogeneity with these pupils, the reasons why the statement ceased would be similar, giving this group of young people some commonality.
- In terms of age, the young people should be in the year groups' nine to eleven. These age ranges were chosen as the author considered that older pupils would be able to give more informed views and that pupils younger than this might not possess the wealth of experience required for the research. They would also have gone through the year nine transition review process and should therefore have provided their views as part of that review. In addition, the author believed that they would have information relating to their involvement and attendance in that key annual review. In addition, young people's capacity for language, action and self-reflection is not only qualitatively different from that of adults but these capacities are also qualitatively different for different age groups of children (Greig et al 2007).
- The parents were willing for their child to take part in the research.
- The young person was willing to be involved in the research.

The above criteria were determined in order to make the research manageable, and to ensure that the young people were typical of the group being studied (e.g. similar age and category of SEN).

The names of all pupils whose statements had ceased between February 2005 and September 2006 were extracted from the database maintained by the EP Service. The

total number of statements ceased during this period was forty (i.e. pupils across all year groups and categories of need). Four pupils in year groups below year nine were excluded from the sample population, as described above. Two pupils with BESD whose statements had ceased because they were placed in the LA's behaviour provision were also excluded, as this met their needs without the need for a statement. This left thirty-four pupils in years nine to eleven with statements which had ceased, with SpLD as the main basis for having had a statement. Selection was then achieved by selecting every sixth child. Five pupils were selected by this method. In addition, the pilot study pupil was also included; making the sample interviewed 17.6% of this population (6 divided by 34). It is acknowledged that in qualitative research working with smaller databases provides intensive analysis which is often difficult to summarize and generalize to larger populations (Silverman, 2006).

Although the size of the sample was therefore relatively small, only 6 young people, the author considered that the sample selection would still provide a sufficient cross-section of views and opinions from this group of young people. Moreover, the actual experience of accessing and obtaining consent from potential participants, described in 4.5.2 below, meant that even if every young person had been offered the chance to be part of this study, the sample size would not have been much greater.

Details of the statement ceased population (February 2005 – September 2006) are shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5 - Statement ceased population February 2005 to September 2006

Total statements ceased	40
Male	28
Female	12
Year Group 2	2
Year Group 7	1
Year Group 8	1
Year Group 9	12
Year Group 10	8
Year Group 11	16
Category of Need	
MLD	1

SpLD	36
SALT	1
BESD	2

Gender, ethnicity and culture did not influence the selection of the participants. The school they attended was also not a factor, although the interviewees came from five separate schools. However, the author had had previous involvement with one participant and his/her parent via attendance at their year nine transitional review. The research had been discussed in general terms with them, and the author was able to gauge interest and obtain provisional permission to contact them nearer the start of the research. This young person happened to be one of those selected. As more than two years had lapsed since the introduction of the research, the author felt that confidentiality and anonymity was not compromised.

Where a young person initially chosen was not interviewed for one of the reasons described in 4.5.2, a replacement was selected by further selection from the remaining population.

The data was therefore collected from six young people (including the pilot study participant). The predominant area of need was SpLD. Two were female, four male. Five of the participants when interviewed were in year ten and one in year eleven.

As demonstrated in Table 5, as more boys had statements that ceased, this helps to explain why the sample represented two girls and four boys. Therefore, the following chapters have been written in such a way that the girl's identities cannot be recognised. In order to do this, the young people are referred to as s/he or P1-6 (Pupil 1-6).

4.5.2 Access to the participants and obtaining consent

Parents were initially approached by telephone. As described in Chapter 3, the author had decided that sending information about the research without any preliminary discussion, inviting the young person to take part because they had had SEN, was unethical and could cause psychological damage. The research aims, content and what it would entail were therefore discussed with the parents, and if they agreed they would discuss it with their child, and the author would then speak directly to them. The author felt it was important to contact the parents directly to gauge their responses; it appeared more ethically sound to seek their permission first without troubling the young people unnecessarily, in the event that the parents refused for their child to be involved. A letter of introduction, the participant information sheet and consent form were then

sent to the parent and child to read. This gave them the time to make an informed decision about whether to take part.

Moreover, through telephone contact, the author was able to clarify the address of the young person, therefore avoiding the participant information letter and consent form being sent to the wrong address.

Even within this size of sample, the author experienced difficulties in making contact with the young people on the EPS database. Five young people who were initially selected had to be excluded as there were no recent telephone numbers, so the author was unable to contact them. A letter sent to one parent and their child who had agreed on the telephone to take part was not returned. In addition, two pupils were excluded as, although the author had obtained their telephone numbers through school, as part of preparation for the JAR inspection described in Chapter 3.5.4.1.3, this provided an ethical dilemma as the young people's anonymity could have been compromised.

Confidentiality and safeguarding factors were also considered as part of the risk assessment (Appendix 2), and contributed to the selection of a smaller sample size. This included arrangements for access to the pupils for the interview (they could not be seen in school as this would compromise their anonymity). The author had to arrange to meet them at venues outside school, and often at their homes in the evening. This created problems in that the author had to arrange for someone (not members of the EPS) to be aware of her whereabouts for her own safety. The author also had to arrange for a parent/carer to be present in the house during the interview. Another element the author considered was that if there had been greater numbers, there may have been an increased likelihood that one or more of the young people interviewed may have been harmed psychologically due to the sensitive nature of the research.

There are additional difficulties when selecting children or young people for research, especially those with SEN. There was always the potential for parents to decline or refuse their child's involvement in the research, possibly because of the author's previous role as SEN Manager and consequent parental beliefs that she had been the cause for the statement ceasing. In the case of two young people interviewed, their parents had been unhappy that the statement had ceased. One of the parents had threatened to take the case to the SEN Tribunal to avoid the statement ceasing, although the situation was resolved amicably via a disagreement resolution meeting. The author acknowledged these parents as critical gatekeepers with the ability to influence research progress. However, the author did approach this parent as the child

had been selected and received a positive response. In another instance, a parent was approached and although in agreement, strongly requested that she also be interviewed as she had a lot to say about the statement ceasing. The author explained the research was about obtaining young peoples' views and not parental perspectives. This research was then discussed with the young person and the research documentation was sent to the home. The consent form was not returned. The author was therefore aware that some parents may have perceived there to be a 'hidden agenda' and wanted their own views heard, possibly perceiving an LA employee (the author) as a stakeholder in the research, and therefore that the findings would automatically favour the organisation. However, most parents were positive about the research being undertaken and keen for their child to be involved 'to help others'. Some parents also provided transport to and from the venue and offered their home as an interview venue. All interviews were recorded so that key information could be transcribed and field notes made. For an example of the transcripts across a range of questions see Appendix 4.

The following were key factors to obtaining consent:

- Clarity about the purpose of the research, the use to which it would be put and how the young person's views would be obtained were made clear to both them and their parents.
- The maintenance of confidentiality, taking into consideration tensions with child protection issues and duty to report on these, was discussed with parents and the young person.
- The choice of settings and interview environment were negotiated, and the use of appropriate techniques to avoid abuse of power, bias and misinterpretation were discussed.
- The parents and young people were reassured that safeguarding procedures were available if required.
- The researcher's competencies and characteristics, such as the ability to gain rapport with the parents and young people and to communicate in plain and familiar language.

4.6 The pilot study

In quantitative research pilot studies are generally recommended to be carried out before the main study, to measure research outcomes and so increase the main study's reliability, validity and practicability (Cohen et al, 2000). In this instance the pilot study was used primarily to review the interview schedule and cultural web application and also to identify any potential safeguarding issues that may arise. The pilot study

focused on the views of one young person (P1) who had a statement of SEN that described him/her as having SpLD and BESD compounded by a diagnosis of ADHD. The pilot study is discussed in detail to provide an overview of the intricacies encountered by the author when attempting to carry out research with young people, especially those with SEN.

This study aimed to elicit views P1s participation within the statutory assessment process, from the identification of his/her SEN, the start of the statutory assessment process, the issuing and removal of the statement of SEN, using a semi-structured interview. Appendix 5 provides the interview framework. In addition, a cultural web analysis was undertaken to look at his/her past experiences of the SEN culture.

P1 was identified as a potential participant for the pilot study through the author's involvement with him/her prior to the year nine transition review. In the author's authority priority is given by the EPS to year nine transitional assessments for those pupils with statements (as part of the reducing reliance on statements agenda). Information obtained from the year eight annual review indicated that P1 had made significant academic and behavioural progress. The parent therefore, at this review, had been involved in a preliminary discussion that her child was approaching the LA's exit criteria and that this would warrant further discussion at the year nine review. Direct contact was made with the parents for permission for the author to complete the transition assessment, and reference to the possibility that the statement may cease (as suggested previously) was also discussed. The research was introduced and the parent asked her views regarding P1s possible involvement in the research. The parent gave permission, indicated that P1 might be interested in taking part in the study and agreed for the author to approach him/her for permission.

Before the transitional review, cognitive assessment and attainment testing was undertaken by the author and feedback on progress provided directly to the parent and P1 after the assessment. P1 met the authority's exit criteria in terms of intelligence threshold and attainments, and had also achieved the objectives set out in the statement. Both were in agreement for the ceasing of the statement to be discussed at the forthcoming transition review. To cease a statement, the LA implements a process to determine whether the young person is competent enough not to warrant receiving support from them to meet their needs. P1 had made significant progress both in terms of learning and behaviour and was also extremely positive and realistic about his/her future career and life prospects. The author discussed all these aspects fully with P1 and his/her mother. The pilot study was again discussed in general terms to determine

interest. P1 was keen to take part in the research, and further discussion about the research enabled permission for a combination of methods to be trialled, including involvement in piloting a semi-structured questionnaire, helping rephrase the interview questions (for the intended audience of teenagers), and the application of a cultural web analysis.

At the year nine transition review the school's views were sought about provision at School Action Plus of the SEN CoP (DfES, 2001a). In this case, as both P1 and parent were in agreement for the statement to cease, there were no perceived hidden agendas regarding the research by them and it was agreed that the transition review recommendation would be that the statement should cease.

In qualitative methods as the research interviewer is inevitably part of the social construction process, the author was aware that gaining access to this pupil through the measures described above required greater reflexivity when analysing the researcher's contribution to this process (described in detail in Chapter 7). However, in attempting to discuss the extremely sensitive nature of SEN, and to support or refute the reported negative connotations or stigmatising labels attached to SEN per se, e.g. incompetency and failure (Corbett, 1996, Billington, 2000, Armstrong, 2003) and victimisation (Norwich, 1997, 1999, 2002a, 2002b, and Kelly and Norwich 2004), it was considered that the opportunity to pursue the intricate interactions and processes occurring with this pupil for the pilot study outweighed these potential problems.

Difficulties first arose when the author attempted to compile a list of open-ended, semi-structured questions for the interview that could be used initially with the pilot study participant, and later, with other young people. The questions and questioning techniques had to be considered carefully. They were intended to be relevant, easy to understand, asked in adolescent and teenage language and unambiguous.

The pilot study highlighted the many interlinked ethical and moral dilemmas and educational implications that had to be taken into consideration (Christensen and James, 2000, Harker 2002); these influenced the full research. The most significant were gaining P1's informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, negotiating the setting and context for the interview schedule, and ensuring safety and protection. Before P1 agreed to participate in the research, all the relevant information s/he needed to give informed consent was provided, including details of the position and involvement of the researcher in the research, its purpose, what it involved, how the research was to be conducted, the time implications and what would happen to the

information collected. Time to discuss any questions and clarify any issues was made available. Confidentiality and anonymity limits were also discussed in advance. P1 was also offered the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time, even retrospectively. However, in hindsight the author became conscious that although attempts were made to ensure P1's safety and the avoidance of psychological damage, she felt increasingly uncomfortable with certain aspects of the pilot study as discussed in more detail in Chapter 7, and decided that a full risk assessment was required for the main study. This appears as Appendix 2.

The interview took place in a location agreed with P1. As the setting, timing and context can all impact on the outcome of the research, P1 also decided the time of the interview. The author started the interview by clearly explaining the purpose of the research, the aims of the interview and the role that the young person would play in it. Although permission had already been given to record the interview, this was re-confirmed on the day - i.e. by wishing to capture all the important detail and not to be distracted by taking notes. Before starting, the author recapped that P1 had been through the statutory assessment process, and no longer had a statement of SEN due to progress made. The number of questions drafted was discussed, and both agreed that whilst the pilot study interview framework was comprehensive, there were too many questions (twenty-nine in total). The trial run also highlighted difficulties in P1's understanding of the questions. P1's help was invited to identify the best questions to ask and the right language for the author to use when interviewing other young people in later research. This discussion was also to promote rapport and develop a conversational style to the interaction. The amended prompt questions are shown in Appendix 6.

Two separate interviews took place on different days, the semi-structured interview schedule and the completion of a cultural web analysis. Both were taped and lasted approximately one hour. The interview schedule questions aimed to find out P1's views about the statutory assessment process along several dimensions including beginnings, participation, provision (support) to meet his/her SEN, relationships, labels and endings. Questioning techniques were also used to facilitate the conversation to supplement the interview schedule (Brown and Wragg, 1993). The cultural web analysis aimed to find out characteristics of the SEN culture experienced by this young person, and to identify how this culture could be changed. Although the initial explanation of the cultural web was difficult, and terms such as paradigm were not appropriate, this technique appeared to produce more narrative than the semi-structured interview, with questions such as "What are the stories around a young person with a statement of SEN?" Field

notes were made after both interviews and follow-up discussions took place with P1's mother to ascertain if s/he had indicated feeling uncomfortable in any way during the interviews. The author was assured that P1 had enjoyed attending the sessions and a Likert Scale (1932) rating question completed by P1 also confirmed this. James (2004) suggests that the researcher's own competence, interpersonal qualities and attributes will help determine the quality of interaction with the child or young person. In this case, having met with P1 and his/her mother on two occasions prior to the interview did help.

Felce (2002) notes the difficulties in eliciting views and having appropriate methods to elicit these views. In the pilot study, although prepared with a script of questions with opportunities for prompts, the author found it difficult to ask the questions in an easily understandable and accessible way. This was partly due to the terminology linked to SEN, and the author's concern that as the theme was a particularly sensitive one, she did not wish to upset P1, especially as s/he was the pilot for the main research. For example, the author had falsely assumed that P1 would know what a statement was, but it soon became apparent that s/he had a very different interpretation of this. However, this prepared the author for the remaining five interviews, and possible responses to issues such as these were prepared. In addition, a method was developed for P1 to indicate if s/he did not understand any unfamiliar or jargonistic words; P1 would raise his/her hand at any point s/he didn't understand something, and the author would then rephrase the word or sentence. This method was also explained to and used with the other participants.

However, despite initial reservations about how the pilot interview had gone, the author felt that she had developed a positive relationship with P1 and felt able to express at the end of the interview how difficult she had found it trying to talk in teenage speak. P1 agreed to help further through revisiting the questions again, to look at how they could be adapted for the other participants in the research. The devil's advocate strategy (Harris and Sutton, 1986) was used by the author who went through the questions with P1, checking out constructs against her use of language and his/her understanding of them, in effect using P1 to share or bounce ideas off.

4.7 The main study

The main study process closely mirrored the pilot study described above, except where the author had learnt from the pilot. Although the original intention was for the introductory letter, participant consent form and participant information sheet to be posted out, the author decided to contact parents first via telephone to introduce the research, discuss the title and requirements to ascertain an expression of interest. If

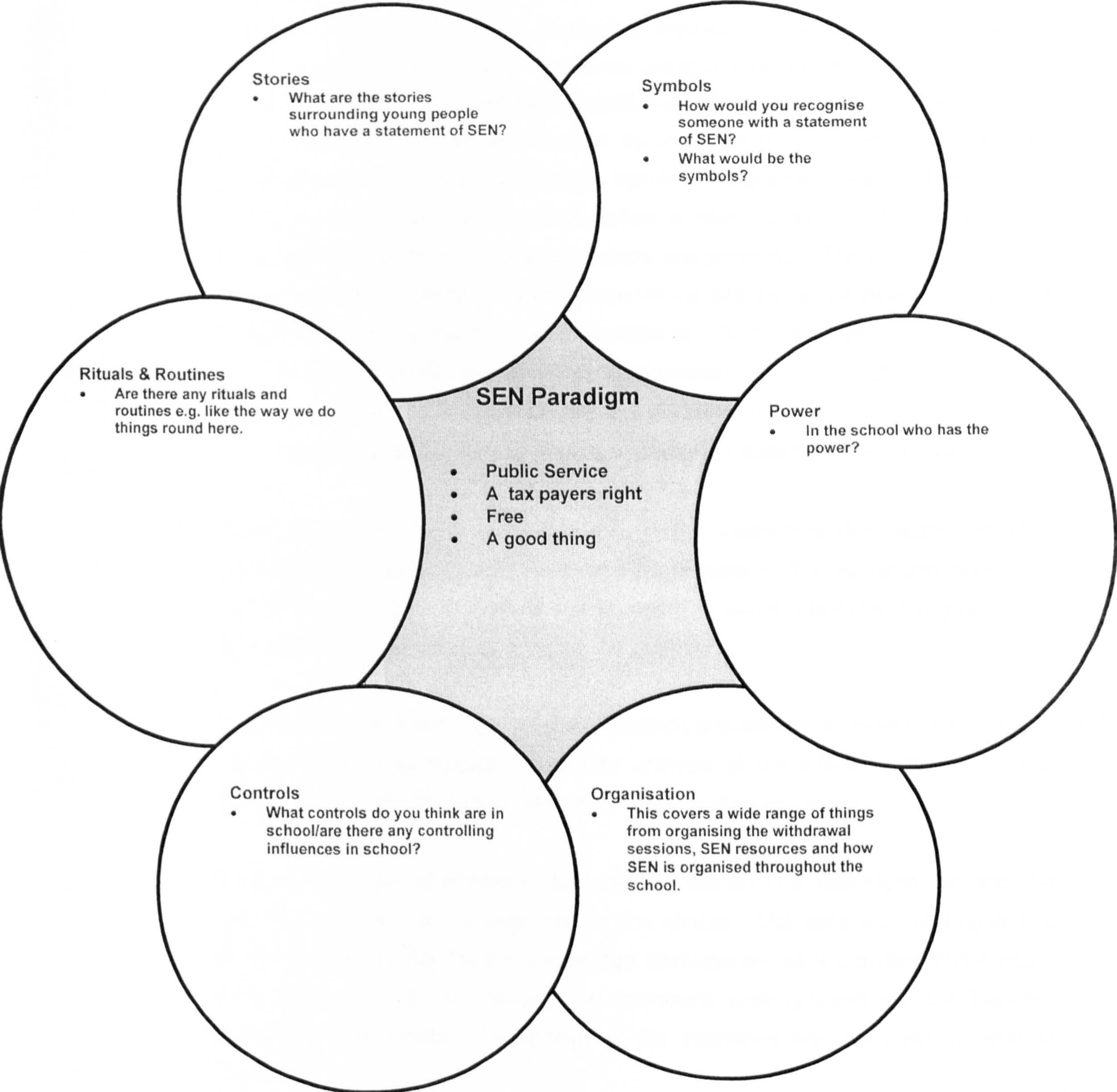
the parents were in agreement, they were asked if they would discuss this with their child and then if the child was also in agreement, the documents were sent to them. Parent and child reactions were also noted when initial permission was sought to interview the child. This method of contact, though successful, did throw light on other ethical issues that the author had not anticipated and are described in Chapter 3.

Although no special safeguarding procedures were required (BPS, 2006), prior to the interviews a generic risk assessment was completed (Appendix 2), to identify and minimise any risk of harm from participating and develop mechanisms to deal with any issues that may arise (Lovett, 1996). There was no evidence during or after the conclusion of the main study that the young people had shown any signs of distress or reluctance to continue in the research.

Although the structure of the interview process occurred naturally, it was similar to the sequence of interview sessions identified by Robson (2002). The interviews consisted of an introduction, warm-up, main body of the interview, cool off and closure. The introduction included name exchanging, discussion about the purpose of the research, right to decline, thanking them for taking part, reassurance of confidentiality, safeguarding information and clarification that the interviews would be taped. As part of the warm-up, time was spent engaging in general conversation and a brief background of the interviewer was given. This period allowed for the checking of the volume of the tape recordings and where to best position it to maximise the recording. The main body comprised the interview schedule and the completion of the cultural web in the one session. A lesson learned from the pilot study was to use a visual representation of the cultural web. A blank template of the cultural web was therefore made available to explain its purpose. The young people were then asked to complete the web (Figure 2). An analysis of how it was explained and carried out is described in more detail later in this chapter.

As each session approached its conclusion, the participants were informed and asked to answer a Likert Scale (1932) rating question allowing them to reflect on the session. The interviews closed by thanking the young people for their contributions and how to make arrangements to contact them when the draft thesis was available.

Figure 3 - The cultural web template (adapted by the author)



4.8 Data collection using a semi-structured interview

Throughout the research, the methods used in the collection, organisation and analysis of the data developed together in an iterative process. The research involved two tiers of data collection and analysis: interviews using a semi-structured interview and a cultural web analysis. The pilot study established the coding framework that continued into the main study. Key and prompt questions relating to the young people's experiences of, and involvement in, the statutory assessment process, the use and benefits of educational support and the effect of having a statement were developed into six distinct themes for placing behaviours and processes. The interviews included fewer scripted questions than originally used in the pilot study, but instead asked more narrative-inducing questions (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), such as:

- Can you give me some background information about your SEN?
- Can you tell me what you know about the statement?
- What did you do differently before and after the statement had ceased?

It was not the author's intention to work through the questions systematically, but rather to use them as a guide to shape the narrative responses. The author anticipated that some of the young people would talk at length to some questions, but give limited responses to others.

Throughout the pilot study and the main research, a qualitative analysis of the interview data was completed through a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts (see Chapter 5). This identified descriptive information and other themes.

The data was then organised around the key themes and addressed the research questions identified at the beginning of the chapter. The data was interrogated to identify 'fit' into the six themes: beginnings, participation, SEN provision and support, relationships, endings and labels. The responses were grouped into the theme(s) which they represented. The findings of the interviews are described in detail in Chapter 5.

4.9 Data collection using a cultural web

Data was also collected through the use of a cultural web exercise (Johnson and Scholes, 1999 and Johnson et al, 2005), as referenced in Chapter 2. In this research the cultural web was put into operation through providing each young person with a blank format of the web (Figure 3) with the six inter-related circles (stories, symbols etc). The web was explained in terms that the diagram could be used to explore their views on how these 'circles' impacted on them in the statutory assessment process.

Every cultural web is based on a paradigm, described by Maxwell (2006) as the philosophical framework within which research takes place, and is considered to connect the overarching and interconnecting assumptions which attempt to explain the nature of truth and reality. In this instance, the author adapted some of the assumptions illustrated by Johnson et al (2005) in the cultural web drawn up by NHS managers (e.g. a service that is freely available, a public service that is a 'good thing'). The author had identified, in her experience within the SEN context, similarities between the assumptions about the NHS and the provision of support for young people experiencing difficulties via a statement of SEN. Following the completion of the cultural web, the author briefly discussed the paradigm with the young people who accepted the author's suggestions for the paradigm.

A cultural web can be used to understand another person's attitude and perspective of a situation and to explore those attitudes further. Although starting with a paradigm adapted from the NHS, the researcher did not impose her own perspective or views, in order to enable the exploration of such attitudes. The young people were shown the format of the cultural web and asked to think quickly to questions asked by the author and linked to the themed circles. The cultural web questioning style was adapted by the author, the 'root' questions asked to elicit descriptions were amended to be related to the young person's own perceptions about SEN and are included in Figure 3, e.g. "What are the stories about a child or young person with a statement of SEN?" allowed exploratory questions to be asked. Stories are described by Johnson et al (2005, p. 202) as:

'told by members of the organisation to each other, to outsiders, to new recruits and others, embed the present in its organisational history and also flag up events and personalities, and typically refer to those events or people who deviate from the norm'.

Stories were explained to the young people on how other children, school staff or parents may talk about children with a statement or who had SEN. Symbols were explained in terms of asking the young people to think about any visible symbols linked to having a statement or SEN. They were asked how they would recognise someone with a statement of SEN and if someone with SEN was walking down a corridor, what would make people think they were different? The young people were asked to identify who in the school has power, how power is used and who should have the power? Discussions about organisation covered a wide range of issues including the organisation of the withdrawal sessions, SEN resources and how SEN is organised throughout the school. The young people were also asked to think about what controls

or controlling influences there were in school. Finally, they were asked about rituals and routines within the school, the way in which things are usually done.

This format was then repeated with each young person but this time looking at the cultural web in an ideal world. The questions were therefore modified to allow the young people to think about 'in an ideal world, what would be the stories surrounding a child with a statement?' What would the world of an SEN pupil look like etc?

The author facilitated the completion of a cultural web analysis, based on the young people's experiences of having a statement of SEN and their involvement in the SEN system and culture. This data complemented and enhanced the data from the interview schedule as the young people described the stories, symbols, power, organisation, controls, rituals and routines within this culture.

The model was used to help make sense of and examine aspects of the SEN culture, and to consider strategic changes required within its organisational culture and systems. Descriptors that characterised the current SEN culture, facilitators and blockages of change were identified. Based on the young people's combined responses, the author drew up two cultural webs described in more detail in Chapter 5, and also interpreted these findings through the use of the themed questions described in the cultural web literature and integral to the aspect of the cultural web under discussion (Johnson et al, 2005, p.203).

CHAPTER 5 - DATA COLLECTION AND RESULTS

5.1 Chapter overview

The results are presented in two discrete sections based on the two research questions for the study using the semi-structured interview schedule and the analysis of the cultural web. This chapter describes the data obtained. Specific examples of quotes from the interviews are provided to highlight particular issues.

5.2 Research questions

The research questions formulated for this research project were:

1. What are the perceptions of young people about their involvement in the process of statutory assessment, the issuing of a statement, the benefits of the support allocated to them by the statement and the subsequent 'ceasing' of that statement?
2. What are their perceptions of the SEN culture?

Each section will illustrate the results relating to the research questions. The results are discussed in Chapter 6 and a summary provided in Chapter 8.

5.3 Data collection

This study mainly involved two tiers of data collection and analysis. Data was collected via the semi-structured interview and a qualitative analysis completed through a thematic analysis of the transcripts (Silverman, 2006). This involved establishing themes (described in 5.4) and recording the 'mentions' within each theme. Therefore, using a thematic analysis approach, the young people's responses, recorded where text fell into the pre-determined themes, have been presented as quotations under each themed heading. Data was also collected through the use of a cultural web (Johnson and Scholes, 1999) to complement and enhance the data from the interview questions. Other forms of data also were collected and include the author's records of telephone conversations with parents and the young people, field notes made during the research and reflections on the interviews undertaken.

As part of the research process, the young people experienced a range of contacts with the author. They initially had telephone contact, following the author's conversation with their parents, the parent received the participant information letter and consent form and discussed it with their child. This consent form was then signed by the young person. Another telephone call took place to negotiate the date, time and venue for the

interview. The young people experienced the interview, the tape-recording and the cultural web analysis. One of the young people received the transcript for information and amendments. This young person was also involved in a feedback session. Two other young people also experienced feedback sessions.

5.4 Presentation of findings - interview schedule

The pilot interview provided a 'coding framework', identifying the themes of beginnings, participation, SEN provision and support, relationships, endings and labels, from which the interviews in the main study were structured.

5.4.1 Beginnings

This theme relates to how the young people first became aware of their SEN and how adults discussed this with them, introducing the concept of a statutory assessment and a statement.

All the young people interviewed were unaware of the specific date or timeframe when the statutory assessment process began. Five could generally not remember whether adults had discussed this with them, although P6 was able to name a specific teacher that had told him/her but could not remember how or when s/he was informed. No-one could remember the terms 'SEN' or 'statement' being used. However, all recognised that support started at primary school (at around eight or nine years old). The majority (apart from P6) thought it would have been their parents who would have provided information for them but couldn't remember. P1 described a memory of a tutor coming to the house to teach him/her on a weekend morning which caused feelings of unfairness as it was a day off from school. This young person also spoke quite emotively about a decision one Saturday morning not to go home for the English lesson and from that day the private tuition stopped. P2 was in year one at the time and remembered being quite confused, not about the statutory assessment process or the issuing of a statement, but more about being singled out for support and wondering why others weren't dyslexic⁴.

I would have a special needs teacher to help me with everything and they explained I would probably have one for the rest of my school life. (P2, T8)

I didn't really know that they were special needs. (P5, T6)

⁴ Please note that SpLD and dyslexia have been used interchangeably by the young people and the author in Chapters 5 and 6.

I didn't hear that term (statutory assessment) but I remember my mum saying I needed help in class. (P5, T16)

Well, I didn't really know I had a statement at the time, all I know is that I couldn't keep up with the other children and needed extra help. This made me feel that I was not thick, but there was something different about me. (P5, T28)

Most remembered going to teachers for small group lessons (Maths and English) with occasional individual lessons. P3 couldn't remember any specific details, even on transfer to high school.

5.4.2 Participation (i.e. during the life of the statement)

This theme aims to identify how the young people had been involved throughout the process.

When asked what they knew about their statements, five of the young people said they had never seen a copy of the statement of SEN, P3 and P6 in particular could not remember the process of statutory assessment, suggesting that they had not provided their views at the start of the statutory assessment process and had no knowledge of the information the statement contained. No-one gave any indication that they knew it was a legal document. One young person said they were given the opportunity to read the statement:

Every time I got a new statement, he (the SpLD teacher) would go through it with me. (P2, T29)

Another was not so sure:

Well I don't know if I have read my statement or not and that but I was given a sheet of paper and that with stuff I had to improve on. (P4, T27)

From what I remember, I had targets to achieve. (P5, T26)

However, it wasn't clear to the author whether it was an individual education plan (IEP) or a statement of SEN as target setting appeared to be a strong factor in reviewing progress. The young people also appeared to be confused when asked about the difference between the IEP and a statement. P2 could remember reading the statement on its arrival, but then not fully understanding the huge words in it. P1 constantly referred to the Special Support Assistant (SSA) as the statement, and had no knowledge of the SEN documents collated as part of the SEN file. Others could remember being asked how the support was going and knew that there were

opportunities to talk about their statements at the annual review. All seemed aware of the term annual review, although they appeared to be less familiar with the review process. There was no evidence to suggest that the young people had been involved in any wider or multi-agency annual review meetings before the most recent transitional review.

I can remember my mum going into school for meetings. I don't remember much else. (P5, T34)

P5 had attended some meetings:

Because I was older, I was more aware about the work and maybe I would have liked to have given input. (P5, T45)

Frustration was also expressed by P2 that school staff and parents dominated the review meeting, staff generally speaking to the parents (usually the mother attended) or amongst themselves, ignoring their point of view. When parents were unable to attend, more attention was given to the young person involved in the review:

I just kind of sit there - they won't speak to me.... If my mum's not there, then they will just speak to me which feels better because I'm getting my point of view across. (P2, T20)

On this occasion, this resulted in P2 being able to answer all the questions and say what s/he thought, instead of the mother telling school what she thought. P2 was also not able to have any say in the writing up of the final statement (although this may have been the minutes of the annual review meeting) and, although s/he tried to express this point of view at the annual review, felt ignored as nothing was recorded.

In the case of P2, s/he had been prepared for high school transition, and was introduced to the SpLD teacher who explained the specialist sessions that would take place. When asked the reasons why the young people thought they needed support, they replied that the support was for their difficulties with reading and/or Maths, that they had got behind in subject areas and needed more help than other pupils, P3 also identified difficulties with completion of coursework.

P1 and P3 seemed genuinely shocked at the thought of files being held containing various reports about them. They asked if they could see their files if they wanted. As a number of these young people had been assessed by different professionals over the years they seemed unaware that all these professional groups would have their own files on them.

5.4.3 SEN provision and support

The prompt questions in this theme were intended to examine how effective the support provided via the statement had been.

The helpfulness, type and level of support provided by the statement were discussed. All of the young people appeared ambiguous about how 'effective' the support provided via the statement had been, identifying that the statement equalled SSA or SpLD teaching. P1 interchangeably referred to the support as the statement, suggesting that:

It (the statement) just followed me around 24/7. (P1, T19)

P2 and P6 recognised that the SpLD support had been helpful, and that some progress was made as a result of having a statement, despite still having a low reading age. P2 highlighted the increase in confidence that the support gave. In contrast, however, feeling 'dumb' meant that this confidence fluctuated regularly and this was also a disadvantage.

I went up a lot even though some things are still quite low like my reading level, but in other ways because my confidence was going up and down so much it also discouraged me. (P2, T97)

P2 also indicated that the SpLD teaching was an enjoyable lesson, and P4 felt having a statement meant it prompted teachers to ask about progress made. However, P1 and P3 felt that the statement never really changed what happened in school:

Nothing really changed. I improved on spelling, but it's still bad. (P1, T174)

I always tried my best in English ... having it (dyslexia) wasn't an issue for me because I know I could do the work, just not as well as others. (P4, T51)

P4 also recognised that it (dyslexia) 'bothered' other people. The adverse impact of having SEN and attending withdrawal sessions included curiosity from peers, name calling, being made fun of when the SSA was present, having to talk and listen to the SSA, and feeling embarrassed at having to go out of the mainstream curriculum for these lessons was also reported by P1 (T154, 179, 190, 204).

Many thought that the classroom support provided by the SSAs and subject teachers was not particularly helpful. They acknowledged that some SSA support had helped but one commented:

Yes/no, because it didn't make me work things out myself. They did things for me. They wanted me to work them out but thought it would be quicker if I didn't. (P1, T171)

P1 and P3 stated that SSAs gave students answers or completed tasks for them. In one case (P1), the influence of the statement and the SSA support particularly appeared to hinder progress and to de-motivate. The support did not appear to help P1 work harder or stay on task, but instead created feelings of resentment. This young person was supported in class by an SSA who apparently had distinct hygiene problems and s/he mentioned the verbal abuse that this SSA experienced from other pupils. It was recognised that generally SSAs had limited disciplinary powers and therefore some pupils took advantage. Other general comments from P1 and P3 were that some of the SSAs complained, nagged, were boring and didn't make the work interesting. P2 received no help in the classroom unless s/he asked for it.

The turnover of both SSAs and SpLD teachers and the SSA personalities were mentioned, some being more helpful than others. P1, P3 and P5 also identified that the SSAs were unable to support the young people effectively in lessons due to their lack of experience, age and limited understanding of the lesson content.

SSAs were in the class and they helped me, but sometimes they didn't know what they were doing. (P5, T49)

P1 was able to recognise positive qualities within some of the support staff that assisted them in school.

I also had a Muslim SSA who could have a laugh, knew when I was tired and not feeling so good. (P1, T206)

However, P1 was also aware of their limitations:

Someone gave me help and I was grateful for this but know that I couldn't turn round and say I didn't like it or want it. I understand that they had put time and effort into working with me. Anyway most gave me the answers. One didn't know anything, we knew more than him. He got things wrong in Maths, didn't know equations. He came to help in Maths but just couldn't do it. We were given these sheets but SSAs didn't tell or explain big words and they took over and did it for us. The SSA once did a full sheet for me while I sat there talking to my mates. (P1, T240)

In one case, three different SpLD teachers were involved in teaching one pupil individually due to timetabling difficulties. The young person felt one teacher would have been better as it would have fostered more trust and a stronger relationship:

Then get to know the teacher and trust them. (P2, T36)

Other timetabling difficulties were identified:

I think I had about five SEN people who came in and helped and some more as well, three in same class as me for Maths once. (Another time) Someone's timetable messed up and two staff came and taught me together. (P1, T270)

Alternative types of support provided (e.g. being taught in groups of three) did not work for P2, partly due to the group dynamics and 'distractions' caused by the others in the group. Being taught in groups reinforced P2's feelings of being 'dumb'; individual teaching was preferred in order to learn more. P4 also described a scenario where the provision was felt to be inappropriate. P4 received support for Maths once a week, when his/her primary need was literacy difficulties. P4 said that Maths teaching was not necessary as it was one of his/her strengths, but because another pupil in the group had Maths difficulties, they were required to receive the same teaching, although knowing that it was too easy for them. This caused P4 frustration when s/he had to attend the lesson but s/he accepted it as recognised were being taught the same to avoid the other pupil feeling at fault (T49). As the group were taught together twice a week, one session focused on English and the other on Maths.

But then we did the Maths, it didn't really help 'cos it just used to be going over stuff that was really easy and I understood, like counting back from like ten backwards. (P4, T65)

Another interviewee identified that some Maths SpLD teaching lessons were not helpful as the teacher went over work that was really easy, and which had previously been understood and mastered. P2 felt they were still completing work that they had done years ago, intended for younger pupils, and had asked specifically for different, harder, work to be set or for the work to be changed:

I wanted the work to change, because it felt like the work I was doing was for kids a lot of years younger than me, so it made me feel quite dumb. (P2, T50)

However, this request was refused with the reason given that the SENCo knew best.

It used to annoy me like checking my spellings, and it would be three-letter words, so it would be really irritating because I was always saying to myself, I can do better than this, I know I can, but why's nobody giving me opportunities? I felt quite powerless about this. (P2, T53)

I did have a teacher twice a week in groups of three and we were all doing the same work and sometimes it didn't seem fair because I could do some of the work and didn't feel it was challenging enough. (P5, T51)

P1 and P3 identified that their poor attendance and late arrival at SpLD lessons resulted in the teachers getting stressed, but often they didn't see the point in attending, due to the easy work they did. P2 had also received a threat from the SENCo that the SpLD sessions would be stopped:

The SENCo got stressed out about this and threatened taking away the lesson because I had abused it. I hadn't abused it, I had been talking to a teacher and it was really important to me ... I was genuinely not late. (P2, T371)

The young people interviewed seemed unclear about what level of support should be provided by the statement or how the support was to be used, and in which subject areas. P2 mentioned that when their SpLD teacher was absent, s/he did not get any specialist teaching until the teacher's return, or any explanation of what would happen if it was a long absence. With P2, the amount of SpLD teaching time seemed dependent on the year group they were in; as they moved up a year, the lesson time decreased from twice a week to once a week.

The statement itself was not generally seen as benefiting the young people, although P6 acknowledged that he had made progress with the support and was angry when it stopped.

P4 discussed his/her coping strategies e.g. the substitution of different words if s/he couldn't spell words s/he had originally thought of, but didn't clarify if this strategy had been taught by the SpLD teacher or whether it was his/her own development. Although reference was made by P2 to the statement and support helping with confidence and supporting emotional needs, dependency on this support was also identified. Only one reference was made to whether they would/could have achieved more with different support. Lack of confidence and frustration when asked to read aloud by staff who knew they had problems with reading was highlighted by P4.

P1 did not know that a diagnosis for ADHD, in addition to SpLD, was included in his/her statement:

What's that? (ADHD was explained by the author) I didn't know I had that. I know I have a disability and I know I got hyper. I was told I'd got to take pills to improve my behaviour. (P1, T199)

P1 reported that being made fun of for taking these pills was worse than being withdrawn for Successmaker sessions, and could not remember being involved in discussions about taking the prescribed drugs or any possible side-effects.

All the young people identified that there were no opportunities for discussion with school and parents about the level of support needed, when this support should take place and how often. P2 also recognised that there was no discussion about the best learning opportunities available to meet his/her individual learning needs. P1 and P2 felt that they were slotted into timetabling arrangements that suited the teachers, not them:

I was just put on a timetable whenever he could get me in because there were so many other pupils needing SpLD lessons. They just put me into the time that they thought was best, even though it does mean you're coming out of a lesson that's really important that you're there. They didn't look at what your learning needs were. (P2, T131)

This young person felt that teachers didn't consider the lessons they were being withdrawn from:

They just look at what time they can get you in to have their lesson. (P2, T135)

5.4.4 Relationships

This theme relates to the relationships the young people interviewed had with their friends, peers, siblings, parents and teachers, and how these influenced their perceptions of having a statement.

The majority of those interviewed felt that generally friends thought positively about them having a statement:

My friends are alright.... so they're ok with it. (P2, T63)

People were alright with me. I'm sorted 'cos I've got mates. (P1, T220)

Many of their friends also had statements, and other (non-statemented) friends had grown used to them:

They just think it's part of me but other people can be quite nasty about it. (P2, T66)

Name calling from peers was mentioned; one person in particular had said that:

He kept saying to me 'you've spelt it wrong, you've spelt it wrong' and making me feel really dumb about it. (P2, T68)

Due to being annoyed, this caused the young person to walk out of the classroom.

It's the kind of things people say to you and it kind of knocks me because my confidence goes up and down really easily. (P2, T70)

Peer relationships appeared positive, with peers seeming to be more interested in what happened in the withdrawal sessions. In one case, the physical attributes and appearance of the female SSA allocated to P1 drew positive attention from peers. However, this also attracted negative attention with one SSA having obvious hygiene problems and being described by the young person and others as 'stinky'. The peer group culture also appeared to place some negative pressure on them as P1 reported s/he had been called names in the past due to having 'SSA minders' and both P1 and P5 felt embarrassed when having to go out for withdrawal lessons.

Five interviewed felt that the family thought positively about them having a statement although P6 said the statement was not talked about at home. However, P2 expressed feelings of being jealous of a sister who had not had any problems within school:

But it (the statement) doesn't really bother her, I think she gets a bit annoyed sometimes when I'm asking her how to spell things when I'm doing coursework, but other than that I don't think it really bothers her because she does see it as a part of being me and I'm still going to be annoying without it anyway. (P2, T114)

Mum's views are that it's handy getting help and, seeing it from her point of view; she thinks it's great but it's not them that has to sit through it or do it. (P1, 147)

My brother hated being SEN, almost everyone does. (P1, T148)

Acceptance of dyslexia as part of the individual was a strong theme that came across with this young person. P1 had an older brother who had also been the subject of a statement, and the perception of having SEN was influenced by the brother's experiences and support from their mother.

The majority of those interviewed felt that in general teachers thought positively about them having a statement. However, comments from some teachers were remembered:

You've got really neat handwriting, considering. (P4, T38)

This young person was unsure why this remark had been made as the identified literacy needs were nothing to do with writing or presentation of work:

I was a bit, like, I don't see why that (dyslexia) should have anything to do with my writing. (P4, T41)

Other comments were made in subject areas such as technology; but P4 was not sure whether it was because s/he had a statement. P4 recognised that they had targets in the withdrawal lessons but, as they were not necessarily subject specific, didn't ask for help in subject areas as they knew they had difficulties with spelling and would not use it as an excuse for not doing the work. P4 also reported:

My teacher said 'if you ever need any spelling, just ask, and I will spell it out for you', but I don't need that, I just write how I think it is, and she says I can use dictionaries and I'm thinking you don't need to say it in front of the whole class. (P4, T46)

Although not said specifically by P4, it appeared that this comment by the teacher was embarrassing and humiliating as the teacher had highlighted his/her difficulties so publicly. P4 was aware that teachers treated him/her differently, giving more help than actually needed, and asking if s/he was OK and understood the work. However, this resulted in P4 being made to feel stupid, when s/he actually felt s/he understood things more than others in the class:

She's probably thinking that I was stupid... can't spell and can't do the work. (P4, T48)

Although the young people's views of teachers appeared generally positive, they highlighted that some teachers did not try to understand or discuss their needs with them. Discussions also took place on the relationships the young people had with their teachers, and whether they experienced any conflict between meeting competing needs and expectations from teachers, parents, family and friends. The young people appeared unaware of any conflicting interests between the SENCo, themselves, their parents and the LA in terms of keeping or ceasing the statement. Although P5 reported:

Well I had found out now I'm older that my mum had to really fight to get my statement and she wasn't really pleased when she knew that my statement was to cease. (P5, T68)

In one case, there seemed to be some conflict where subject teachers told P4 that s/he shouldn't be withdrawn from the lessons s/he had difficulties in. For instance s/he was withdrawn from Maths for small group Maths teaching not connected to the whole class lesson being taught, and similarly for English.

When I used to get took out of Maths and stuff, my teacher just used to say you shouldn't be took out of Maths. (P4, T81)

5.4.5 Endings

Discussions about ceasing the statement generally tended to take place at the annual review. In one case, the mother couldn't attend, so it took place with the young person, the SENCo and the SpLD teacher:

Miss X (SENCo) was saying to me how she thinks I don't need a statement no more, and how it would be ceased if the government agrees with it and if I agree with it ... I asked why over the years I had been ignored so many times and she said 'well it's not that we're ignoring you, we set you targets and you really don't have a point of view in that, because your targets are set by people that look at the amount of work you do and how well you do it' ... I wanted a say in it which it felt like no matter what I did they was ignoring me. (P2, T159)

Reasons given to the young people for ceasing the statement were that they didn't need the statement any more. P4 described where, prior to a review, s/he had to do tests and stuff and assumed that these tests had something to do with the statement ceasing. P4 wasn't sure if a letter had been sent home explaining that the statement was to cease. This young person didn't like the SpLD lessons and explained that for a year, whilst still having a statement, s/he had already voluntarily stopped attending them. P4 indicated that the SENCo was in agreement with the non-attendance:

I mean, like last year, I still had a statement but I didn't go to the lessons. Miss X said she was still going to like watch me, and stuff, see how it was going but I didn't need to go to them. (P4, T100)

P2 continued to see the SpLD teacher on a regular basis after the statement ceased, but on terms negotiated between them if the teacher was free to help with any particularly difficult work.

Four other young people indicated that they would rather not go through the statutory assessment process again as they didn't like it, and were often asked why they were not in lessons and why they had to attend special needs classes and booster lessons. P1 'felt great' when s/he knew the statement was ceasing but had thought that it would happen immediately. Clear views were made about the positives of the statement ceasing:

It will get the SSA off my back. (P1, T177)

Other feelings expressed following the ceasing of the statement included pleasure and pride in the knowledge that although they had had help, they had done it all by themselves:

Well I was quite proud of myself when he said the statement was going to cease because I knew I'd got that way, and I had had help, but I had done it all by myself. (P2, T169)

I felt glad about that because I thought, oh well I've overcome some of the difficulties I'd had with English and stuff. (P4, T102)

Ceasing the statement had boosted confidence in all the young people interviewed. Other factors included:

It felt weird not having SpLD lessons no more, I was so used to having these lessons. It was a big change getting myself used to not having to go there no more. (P2, T171)

Although the statement had ceased, the option of continuing with an SpLD lesson on a weekly basis was available and taken up by P2. In this instance, as this lesson meant withdrawal from a GCSE lesson, P2 explained that s/he did not want to miss the GCSE lesson and the timing of the SpLD lesson was changed to allow withdrawal in a non-GCSE subject.

Five young people said that they didn't miss any of the lessons or support, but recognised that they still had set targets in subject areas. When asked what they would say if they could rewrite their statement, one young person replied:

Probably include a lot more of my views because I hate feeling ignored, it just makes me feel I haven't got a say in what they're doing. (P2, T102)

Advice they would give to others going through the statutory assessment process included:

Don't think just because you've got a statement, or whatever, that you can't do stuff because you can just get better. (P4, T75)

If you just try your best and stuff, you can get better and you don't need it anymore. (P4, T77)

That it's not as scary as it is when you actually start, and that it will help you. It might not feel it's going to help you, but it will help you a lot and it will give you a

lot more confidence, even though you don't feel like you're going to learn. (P2, T122)

To be as honest as you can about what your needs are. (P5, T79)

Another response was:

Do a runner. Don't go through with it ... SSA following you around 24/7. (P1, T153)

When asked what the young people did differently when they had a statement compared to what they did now, P2 had been worried that with the statement, work and behaviour in all the lessons, including the SpLD lessons, had to be perfect:

I kind of knew I had to do everything quite perfectly because I knew that the teachers would be monitoring it because I had been told by one of the teachers that all my work has to be gone through ... I felt, like, I had to do everything perfectly otherwise they would mark down 'that lesson I couldn't be bothered' or 'that lesson I wasn't listening to the teacher as much as I should have been'. (P2, T190)

I am more confident, but I think that is because I feel better about myself because I am not taken out of classes. I no longer feel embarrassed or ashamed. (P5, T178)

Well, I don't think it made any difference 'cos I'm going to go into further education even though I didn't do well in my exams. I don't regret having a statement but I don't know what good it did. (P3, T68)

Suggestions for improving the assessment process were discussed and included making sure that young people had a voice in it:

I would like the statement to change so we do actually have a say on our own targets and what we say when we have our review is actually listened to. (P2, T200)

I would also like it when the parents are there for them to still talk to you instead of acting as if you're not there. It does feel like you're invisible. (P2, T201)

I would also like sometimes, depending on how bad your dyslexia is, for the targets to be made a little bit harder, because it does feel like the targets are sometimes made so easy for you that you know you're going to be able to achieve them and go so much further, but no-one's paying attention when you get past that target. (P2, T203)

Won't ever be a way to make it easier, having to learn and work. (P1, T183)

Ways to help other young people with a statement were discussed, including helping them acknowledge their feelings when starting the SpLD lessons, and the questioning process that they will go through:

Well, I would say you go to the lessons and when you first start off it feels really strange 'cos you do feel, you kind of question yourself why you're different to someone else. (P2, T235)

P2 also explained it in terms:

That other people haven't got it (dyslexia), but it doesn't make you really different, it just means you are a little bit different, and even though you may feel a bit upset that you've got it, you can't change it, but you can get help to improve it, so there's no point beating yourself up about it. (P2, T237)

Times were described when:

I've just kind of sat there for hours thinking to myself, like, why have I always had the problems in the family..... when I was young which meant I had to go into an operation ... why was I the one who had to be different? (P2, T240)

S/he would like it to change:

Because it kind of upsets you, comparing yourself to somebody else when they haven't got it (dyslexia); it just knocks yourself really down. (P2, T246)

Other suggestions for improving the statutory assessment process and helping others included the need for young people to have a say in setting harder targets and to be actively supported to contribute to their review meetings.

5.4.6 Labels

These questions aimed to explore the labelling theories put forward by Corbett (1996) and Armstrong (2003) that having SEN automatically has negative connotations.

The majority did not remember being labelled as such, as many of their friends also had statements but P1 and P2 identified negativity aimed at them through having a statement as they had occasionally been teased and made fun of. P2 described particular situations where pupils were cruel to other statemented pupils through name calling. P1 identified two pupils, both with statements (it seemed for MLD), who had attended the same withdrawal groups. Incidents of name calling and physical abuse by peers against one of these pupils were described including a particular incident where a pupil was stabbed by a pencil:

Others will swear at him and some stab him with a pencil sometimes. He sits there and takes it. I think he should tell someone. Teachers are strict with teaching but don't take bullying seriously. (P1, T218)

P5 identified:

Yes (it felt like I had a label) I felt different because I was taken out of class and people knew. (P5, T99)

The perceptions of how statemented pupils were accepted or rejected by peer groups related to how 'slow' they were seen as being. P1 recognised that behaviours directed against these pupils were due to the type of SEN, i.e. 'slow' as opposed to dyslexic. P1 had not really experienced anything like that because s/he had mates and wasn't 'slow'. Although statemented for SpLD, P1 had a different perception of his/her own SEN and considered him/herself to be better than 'slow' peers.

Sometimes I was with X and X, they are both slow, and different to me. They did the same work and I thought I was smarter. X had learning problems and different types of problems and gets called for that. I don't like to say what he gets called, it's tight. (P1, T213)

People don't know what it's like for dumb kids, not those who just had spelling difficulties, those who were slow. (P1, T195)

Dyslexia as a label was discussed and how the young people described themselves to others when they had a statement. P2 and P4 answered that they would explain about having a statement and would go through what having dyslexia meant, as most people did not actually know what it was:

If anyone would ask me about it then I would tell them exactly what dyslexia was because normally whenever someone asked me about it they don't actually know what it is, so it's just talking it through them with it. (P2, T209)

People kind of put you in this category of being really dumb because they don't understand like what it is ... and they've not been through it. (P2, T251)

They think they know what they're talking about but they don't really because they don't have a clue what it means anyway. (P4, T135)

When asked how parents or teachers might describe them, with their dyslexia, one replied:

My mum always said that it was a little part of me and it just makes me a bit more unique so there's nothing wrong with it. (P2, T221)

There was the recognition by P2 and P4 that if they didn't have dyslexia, they would be placed in higher sets with more appropriate lesson content. One English teacher looking at the higher standard of the coursework produced by P2 than others in that particular set was reported as saying that P2 was not meant to be in the lower set, but because of their dyslexia, had been placed there in case help was needed. This meant that for bright pupils with literacy difficulties they were placed in lower, less academic sets because there was more help in these sets.

I'm being put into a set that I don't need to be put into just because I've got it (dyslexia) which makes me feel I'm being singled out which I would just have preferred to be put into the set I was meant to be in. (P2, T229)

5.5 Presentation of findings – cultural web

The young people in the research completed a cultural web analysis based on their experiences of being in the SEN system. The cultural web model (Johnson and Scholes, 1999) looks at an organisation or service from six inter-related dimensions - stories, symbols, power, organisation, controls and rituals and routines. In this instance the model has been used to help make sense of and examine aspects of the SEN culture. When discussing the concept of the cultural web with the young person, a blank template was available at the interview (Figure 3).

In this research the author has adopted the NHS paradigm used in a cultural web previously (Johnson et al, 2005) due to its similarities with the perception by the public that SEN Services within an LA are free, a public right, a diagnostic service for children and young people, and provider of resources (Figure 4) although this paradigm shifts in the aspirational web to celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion (Figure 5).

5.5.1 An analysis of the culture of SEN by young people

This has provided descriptors that characterise the current SEN culture experienced by them, and identifies facilitators and blockages of change. The cultural web analysis also provided opportunities for narrative with questions by the author such as:

What are the stories surrounding a young person with a statement of SEN?

How would you know if someone had a statement of SEN - what are the symbols?

Who has the power in the SEN systems in your school?

Tell me about the organisation of SEN in your school?

Tell me about the controls in operation in your school?

What were the routines or rituals connected to the SEN systems?

It considers strategic changes required within this SEN organisational culture and systems. The author has drawn up two cultural webs (Figures 4 and 5), based on the experiences described by the young people:

Figure 4 -The SEN culture experienced by young people with SEN

Figure 5 -The SEN cultural web to aspire to

Figure 4 - The SEN culture experienced by young people with SEN (2006)

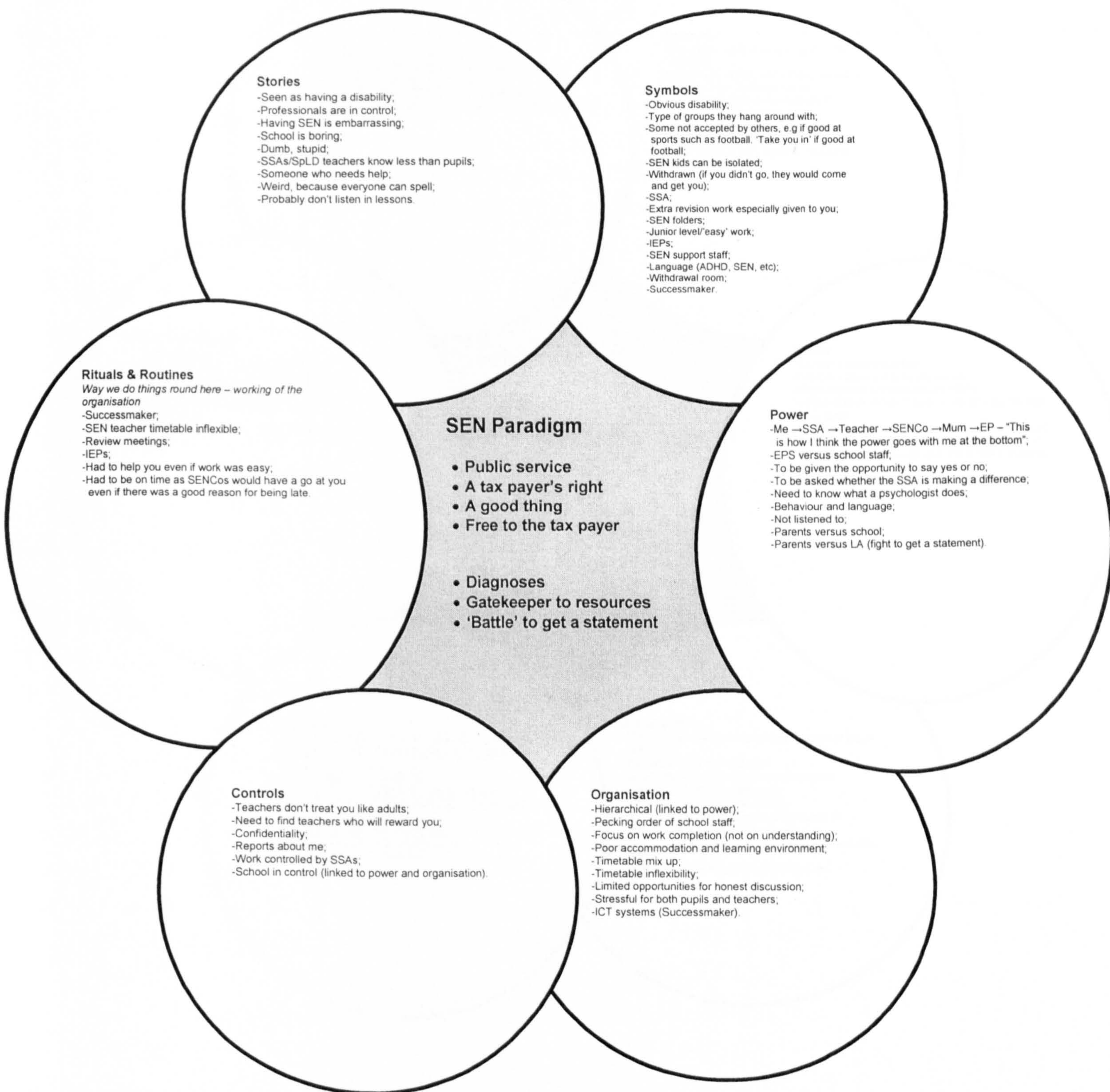
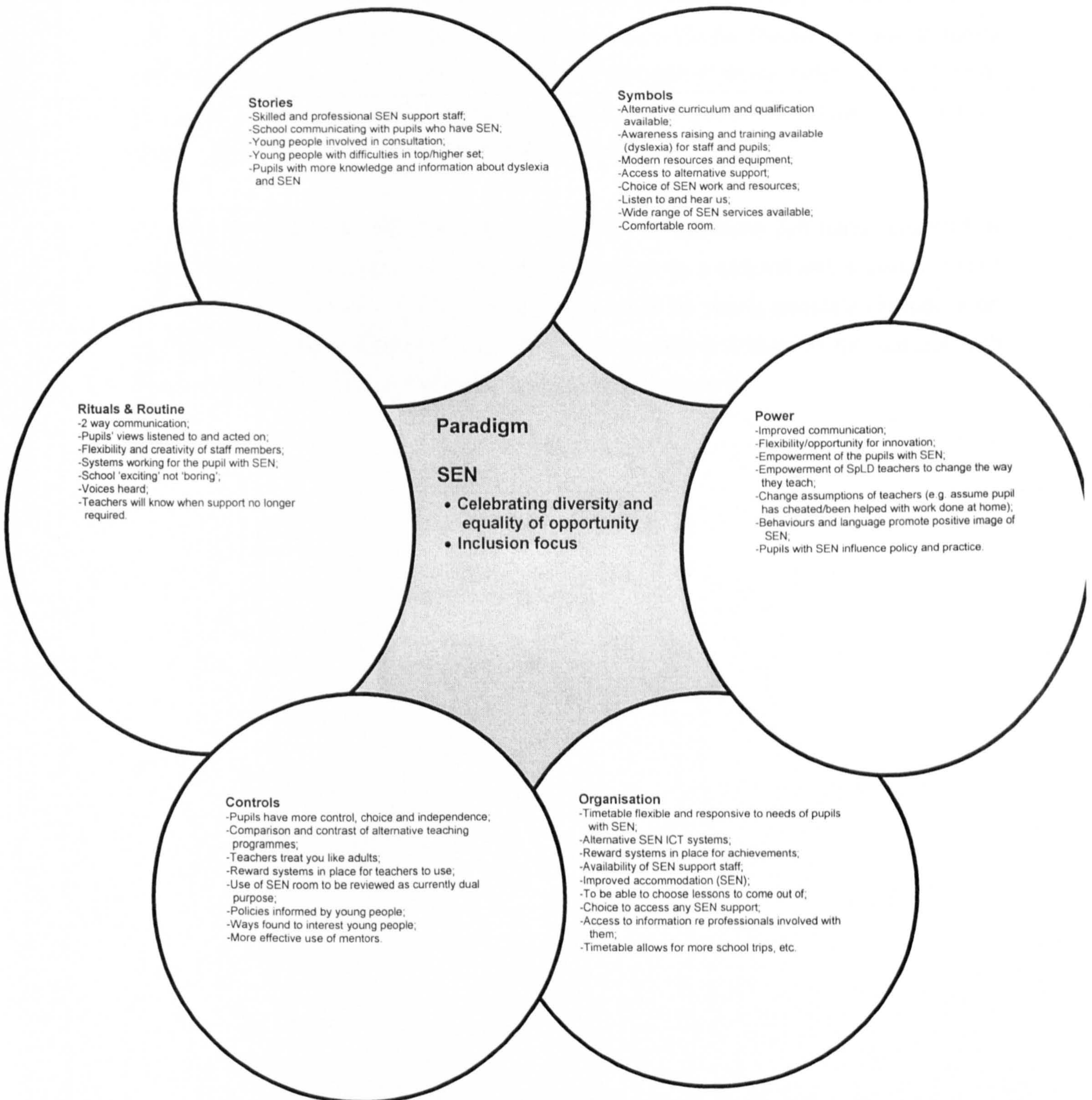


Figure 5 - The SEN cultural web to aspire to



5.5.2 Cultural web questions

The findings from the cultural web analysis have focused on the characteristic of this tool for exploring the many facets impacting on a particular theme, e.g. the statutory assessment process and how, through the identification of characteristics that inhibit or encourage change, they can be used to identify an aspirational cultural web, thereby improving the process. These findings are analysed in Chapter 6.

Johnson and Scholes (2005, p.203) identify a list of questions (left hand column) that organisations should ask themselves when undertaking a cultural web analysis. Based on the research findings, the author has interpreted the young people's viewpoints on the six inter-related dimensions by using the questions shown in the cultural web literature (Table 5). These are further discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 6 – Interpretation of the SEN cultural web by the author

Cultural Web Questions		Author's Interpretation	
Stories			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What core beliefs do stories reflect? • How pervasive are these beliefs (through levels)? • Do stories relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strengths or weaknesses? - successes or failures? - conformity or mavericks? • Who are the heroes and villains? • What norms do the mavericks deviate from? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEN pupils seen as failures reinforced by withdrawal, in class support and SEN file. • Blame culture in operation, both schools and pupils 'blame SSAs' – SSAs are 'forced' to complete pupils work for them or be 'blamed' as incompetent thus increasing pressure on SSAs for their pupils to conform/progress. • SSAs perceived as 'heroes' by schools but seen as 'villains' by pupils. • Beliefs pervasive through all school/ organisational structures and embedded in language used, e.g. disability. • Stories relate to weaknesses in the system. • Schools adhere to SEN criteria. 		
Rituals and Routines			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which routines are emphasised? • Which would look odd if changed? • What behaviour do routines encourage? • What are the key rituals? • What core beliefs do they reflect? • What do training programmes emphasise? • How easy are rituals/routines to change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routines emphasised include SSAs within the classroom. • Key rituals that are used include IEPs, attendance at annual reviews, review meetings, going to the SEN room and Successmaker programmes. • Core beliefs reflected include reluctance to change. • Less SSAs in the classroom would look odd. • Behaviours encouraged by routines include lack of concentration and non-conformity by pupils with SEN. • SSAs follow teacher instructions and programmes of work. • Teachers within the school are reluctant to change timetables to meet the needs of the pupils with SEN. 		
Organisational Structures			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How mechanistic/organic are the structures? • How flat/hierarchical are the structures? • How formal/informal are the structures? • Do structures encourage collaboration or competition? • What types of power structure do they support? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaware of reporting mechanisms and extent of structure. • Hierarchical structures exist. • Formal structures in place, e.g. annual reviews. • Structure encourages internal competition. 		
Control Systems			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is most closely monitored or controlled? • Is emphasis on reward or punishment? • Are controls related to history or current strategies? • Are there many/few controls? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output of completed work. SSAs have to manage this. • Emphasis on punishment – increased workload – to be finished at home in addition to homework. • Submission of annual review information, etc. • Controls historically related to autonomy of SEN staff but now 'controls' linked to SSA accountability. • Too few controls linked to SSA capabilities and knowledge. • Controls also imposed by the parents of pupils with a statement of SEN – examination performance led culture. • Different 'culture', values and attitudes exist. 		
Power Structures			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the core beliefs of the leadership? • How strongly held are these beliefs (idealists or pragmatists)? • How is power distributed in the organisation? • Where are the main blockages to change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited flexibility/opportunity for innovation and empowerment of the pupils with SEN. • Compartmentalisation – bigger picture not seen within the organisation. • Behaviours and language – power that lies behind symbols and rituals. • Hierarchy in place (formal power). • Status dependent on position in hierarchy. • Influence. • SSAs not in possession of knowledge and skills. • SSAs are not influential – powerless. • Blockages to change include cynicism 'if not broken, don't fix it', lack of creativity to meet needs of pupils with SEN, reluctance to embrace reducing reliance on statements. • SEN symbol 'statement of SEN' powerful for school and parent. • Power varies in relation to perceived hierarchical status. 		
Symbols			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What language and jargon is used? How internal or accessible is it? • What aspects of strategy are highlighted in publicity? • What status symbols are there? • Are there particular symbols that denote the organisation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical psychological terminology inaccessible to the stakeholders (customers) of the service – parents, school personnel, LA and the child. • Identification of symbols in the SEN culture, e.g. title of SEN itself, SEN file, the statement of SEN. • Professional reports. • SEN policy documents linked to school strategies, e.g. Inclusion. 		
Overall			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do the answers to these questions suggest are the fundamental assumptions that are the paradigm? • How would you characterise the dominant culture (defender, prospector and analyser)? • How easy is this to change? 	<p>Statements that characterise the culture include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential levers for change (usually ignored). The main blockages are related to the defender culture – reduction on reliance on statements agenda, voice of the child, Ofsted inspections, Emphasis on schools meeting the ECM outcomes will be some of the main facilitators of change. • Change strategy may include acceptance by school that all teachers are teachers of pupils with SEN (not just the SEN department). 		

Further interpretation of the young people's SEN cultural webs and expansion of the questions asked by Johnson and Scholes (1999, 2005) is made below.

5.5.2.1 Stories

Stories are the devices for telling people what is important in an organisation (Johnson et al, 2005). The stories in the current SEN cultural web described how young people with SEN perceived themselves, how others perceived them and how they saw other pupils with SEN. The young people described their feelings when they had a statement as 'weird', 'stupid' and 'dumb'. One young person throughout referred to SEN as 'the disability':

People think you've a disability and I know I have the disability in spelling. Think SEN kids different, not normal and can make fun of them. (P1, T227)

Well, you shouldn't have to feel ashamed because you can't do things like the other kids can. (P5, T194)

In the current SEN cultural web, the young people identified that some other pupils with SEN obviously needed help because of their disabilities, physical characteristics and actions making them stand out from others. They acknowledged that both others and themselves perceived pupils with SEN as different and felt that schools could do more to include them. Reference was made to the type of groups that SEN pupils mix with and acceptance and non-acceptance from peers. It was recognised by P1 that despite having SEN, if you were good at sports such as football, you would have a better chance of being accepted.

We could develop sporting activities for SEN pupils, if they get involved in things like football and they are good at it they may not get picked on as much. (P1, T302)

As reflected in the interview schedule, SSAs and SpLD teachers sometimes knew less than the pupils and training needs again were identified. In addition, stories included SEN support staff failing to meet their needs. As the young people were perceived as needing help because they cannot read or spell, the professionals and school staff were seen as being in control with the young people powerless to change things.

One young person also identified that in an aspirational web:

If I was in my own clothes I could act different as school uniform makes SEN kids look worse. If you're in your own clothes, you can make an effort to look good and to be smarter. (P1, T310)

An ideal story would be that teachers won't question or challenge work done, don't want to go to college to be given help I don't need. Teachers will know when you no longer need support. (P4, T219)

Change people's assumptions, we are put in the category of being dumb, they don't understand, they need more information. Pupils also need more knowledge and information about dyslexia and other SEN. (P2, T382)

The cultural web to aspire to therefore aims to have skilled and knowledgeable SEN support staff, SEN pupils in higher sets, better communication systems and wider consultation with young people with SEN to hear, listen and act on their views, thereby informing and improving service delivery. Practical suggestions for the inclusion of SEN pupils were made such as developing sporting activities for them and changes to the school uniform.

5.5.2.2 Symbols

Questions that prompted this discussion included:

How would you recognise someone with a statement of SEN? (Author stresses the concrete, tangible symbols that are easily recognised.)

As described in 'stories' above, physical characteristics made some pupils with a statement easily recognisable:

He is slow and can't speak properly. If you try and speak to him, he has too much saliva in his mouth. He talks gibberish. (P1, T217)

No-one would look at me and think I was different, but they would know I was different when I was withdrawn from class or when I need special help. (P5, T131)

Symbols of SEN included the provision within the school, such as the SEN withdrawal room and lessons such as Successmaker. SEN support staff (SSAs) were seen as physical and negative symbols of an SEN pupil, therefore reinforcing the problem within the child.

Following you around 24/7. (P1, T81)

Being followed around by the SSA Minders! It's like they're attached to you at the hip. (P1, T231)

SSAs were usually with them that needed help. (P3, T87)

Symbols such as the easily recognisable coloured transparent SEN folder containing the easy junior level work caused embarrassment. Symbols also included being withdrawn and being collected if you didn't arrive at the SpLD lessons on time. Extra revision work and homework for SEN pupils and being placed in lower sets were also mentioned.

People probably think you should be in lower sets like in English and Maths but you don't really have to be. (P4, T159)

The aspirational stories focused on an alternative curriculum and qualifications available to meet the strengths of SEN pupils, and awareness raising and specific training available in dyslexia for staff and pupils.

The fact that the young people did not have access to modern resources and equipment suggests that the funding provided for the statement was used primarily on the support. The venue for the SpLD teaching and lack of comfortable facilities led to the request for a comfortable room.

There should be no more special needs classrooms. (P5, T200)

5.5.2.3 Power

In the current SEN cultural web, aspects of power include the perceived status of the SSAs and their knowledge base. This was not of that of a professional person performing their job in a professional manner, but one who took abuse from pupils.

But they (the SSAs) got called, loads of kids swore at them, no-one wanted someone sitting next to them. I didn't as well. (P3, T87)

The young people recognised that knowledge in terms of personal information was power, and they knew that information about them was being collected and had to go to someone, but did not know to whom.

Where does confidential information go?... So everyone that has seen me in the past will have their own file? Do the SSAs get to see my file?... Am I allowed to see these? Do you have one on me? (P1, T282, 287, 291)

Another young person reflected that they had no power, justifying this by comments such as:

Took me out of lessons they thought would be best – like English. I liked English but not Maths. (P1, T235)

One mother in particular was also identified as a powerful figure in the cultural web, trying to influence the teachers to try different strategies:

She (Mum) comes into school and tells them everything. Mum has power over the teacher and tells her things that might help me. (P1, T250)

Professionals in control were evident in both this dimension and the control dimension. The chain of power was discussed and a process drafted, based on this perception:

Me → SSA → teacher → SENCo → mum → EP. (P1, T254)

In this instance, the EP was highlighted as the most powerful person in the chain with the young person at the bottom:

You've (EP) got the power to stop the statement. (P1, T257)

In this particular case the EP had been pro-active in supporting the pupil and parent's views for the statement to cease. The EP had involved the young person and parents in celebrating this young person's success (both academically and behaviourally), and was instrumental in helping the school accept that P1 had met cease criteria for SpLD and behaviour. As P1 had also requested the statement to cease, s/he felt that they had been listened to and discussion took place around the role of the EP in ceasing this young person's statement.

With regard to the power of the teacher and SSA, comments made were:

Teachers have control over the SSAs, one SSA once told me off for talking to the teacher. (P3, T113)

SSA had little pads to write on and used to throw a benny when someone picked it up. (P1, T247)

Well, you would be given work, the teacher would write into this book, but the worst thing is I'm not allowed to see what she wrote in this book so it kind of feels they could be writing anything about you and you're not allowed to see it... which really confused me because it's about me, so why can't I see it, because, well why not? (P2, T329)

P1 seemed unaware that the SENCo had to report to anyone, and appeared confused as to their role in this process, but knew that they were at review meetings and usually collected information about them from subject teachers for these meetings. The SENCo was generally identified as a powerful person.

There should be a clearer way of seeing who does what and what the SENCo does. Who does she report to? (P1, T334)

P2 felt that teachers used the statement as a threat to make them work harder, giving teachers the power. P1 felt that opportunities should have been made available to discuss the support received:

We should be asked whether the SSA or the SpLD teacher is making a difference. (P1, T326)

Although seen as symbols, the language of SEN (e.g. ADHD, SEN, SpLD, dyslexia, EP, IEP) was not understood by the young people, but was nevertheless used in meetings and reports and was also linked to power. P1 identified the need to know what a psychologist does, the use of big words and the meaning of abbreviations, e.g. EP and SENCo, and the need for different terms to explain the EP role.

The young people identified that in an aspirational web the perception of the power structures should be transparent, with flexibility and opportunity for innovation and empowerment of the pupils with SEN. Pupils should be able to see the bigger picture of SEN within the school. Behaviours and language should reflect SEN in a positive way. Pupils with SEN should be able to influence timetables and curriculum activities. SSAs should have more subject based training and be more creative when working with pupils with SEN. This may lead to more recognition for the work they do. The right to be given the opportunity to say yes or no was emphasised. Statements were not always seen as necessary and the pupil should be asked if they want it to continue.

I think we should have a bit more power, well like timetable changes and things like that. (P5, T204)

We need the opportunity to say, 'I don't want it or I can do it on my own'. (P1, T325)

You need to know who will be involved, and when and for how long. You also need opportunities to be honest about the school and the support from SSAs, although don't want to hurt people's feelings. (P1, T336)

5.5.2.4 Organisation

The young people were unaware of the organisational structure within the school, although P1 identified the existence of a pecking order of staff, with some staff more valued than others with SSAs being at the bottom. SSA access to the statement and the SEN file held on P1 prompted discussion around the remits of confidentiality, the storage of personal files and their distribution.

P1 was quite often in conflict with SpLD staff due to their on task behaviour focus, although this was inconsistent with the response that the SSAs completed work for him/her, suggesting SSAs did this in order to avoid being seen as incompetent by the teachers. However, SSAs were generally described as listening to the lesson in order to feed back to the SEN pupils, who felt that quite often they didn't need to listen and couldn't remember much of the lesson content when it had finished. P1 commented:

Most of the SSAs make people have memory loss and I couldn't remember most of lessons when they had finished because they did it. (P1, T269)

Four pupils told of timetable mix-ups and staff wasting time trying to organise who they were due to support. A situation was described where there would be a number of SSAs in one class all looking for someone to help but in reality they were unable to help as they didn't understand the lesson content.

As described earlier, due to timetable mix-ups, three SSAs came to help P1 in one lesson, and another where two staff came and taught a young person together (P3) to avoid one of the teachers going to teach another pupil whom they had difficulties in managing.

All the young people interviewed said that decisions made within the school about their lesson timetabling, the timing of the individual withdrawal sessions and the length of the session should be discussed with them:

Shouldn't be for an hour either – felt that I'm going to die in an hour. Lessons should be fifteen minutes to half an hour, no longer. (P1, T321)

These decisions appeared to be generally inconsistent due to the emphasis on what suited the teacher best, not the pupil.

Poor accommodation, equipment, resources and environment in which they were expected to learn were highlighted throughout the semi-structured questionnaire and cultural web interviews. One described the SEN room as:

Room small, gets hot, uncomfortable, nothing to read on the walls. SEN like a punishment really. (P1, T267)

Another environment was likened to a goldfish bowl:

The SEN room has large windows, it's more like a goldfish bowl that everyone can look in at you and see the easy work you are doing. (P2, T386)

Other comments included:

Sometimes you would go to classes and teachers would be late and I don't think that was really good organisation. (P5, T142)

The weekly routine of withdrawal sessions or in-class support was discussed, and the fact that on a number of occasions some of the young people didn't attend:

Sometimes if I could get away with it I wouldn't turn up. (P5, T145)

Three young people were given a choice of whether to continue with a reduced level of SEN support (the statements by then had ceased), although they seemed unaware that they were probably still at School Action or School Action Plus on the SEN CoP. P3 was given the option to go to the withdrawal room to revise in year eleven, and was appreciative that SpLD staff would still help with the revision and difficult work.

In an aspirational web, P1 identified that they should be allowed the freedom to go out of lessons for short periods to complete the ten minute Successmaker programmes, stating that they could be used in a more productive way as some were fun to do, with progress charts to complete, and prizes could be given for high scores. P1 also stressed that a clearer way of seeing who does what (e.g. the SENCo) and who they report to and how should be provided, as well as information about which professionals or adults will be involved with them, when and for how long. P1 also highlighted the need for opportunities for young people with SEN to be honest about the school and the support from SSAs.

P1 also thought that schools should try to reduce stress for SEN pupils:

There are certain days when there are too many hard lessons, it needs to be balanced, and then at end of the afternoon break you go in a small room with the SEN teacher. If halfway through the day you have a lesson you choose to attend, that could reduce the stress we have and improve attendance. (P1, T314)

If my work is not finished I have had to complete it at home as well as do homework. This makes you more stressed before you go into the next lesson. (P1, T319)

It was suggested that mentors could replace the SSAs:

Well, we should be able to choose what support we have, like mentors we have in school, I would prefer them to help me in class because the SpLD teacher she gives me work to do and then she just sits back and waits for me to do it. Just watches me. (P5, T206)

Particular lessons were identified as hard and too frequent:

For Science and Maths there are too many lessons in a week. Science is every day except for one. (P1, T317)

More school trips were a suggestion for the aspirational web to reduce stress and to improve attendance. Pressures faced by teachers were also discussed:

Pupils have stressed the teachers out, they have run away in tears. (P1, T319)

In terms of learning, P1, P2 and P4 identified that improved accommodation when being withdrawn would be beneficial.

5.5.2.5 Controls

The current stories surrounding controls were similar to those made within the power and organisation dimensions. The school was felt to be in control most of the pupils and, although confidentiality issues had been raised previously, further concerns were expressed that reports and letters had been circulated about them, about which they had no knowledge. As reported earlier, P2 had their request to add views into a report refused. The fact that the SpLD teacher had no control was also raised by P2 in this section.

Mr X doesn't have any control of what he does because all the work's set for him, because Miss X chooses what to set and what not to set. Miss X has the main control. (P2, T345)

In addition it was noted that:

Teachers could treat us more like adults and ask for our opinions more. (P5, T210)

Because the teachers control. They always control what you do. (P5, 159)

Although SSAs were not perceived to have any power, P1 and P2 highlighted that they control the work given, the amount, decide how it should be presented and record information on the pupils in their notebooks.

The worse thing is, I'm not allowed to see what she wrote in this book ... I'm not allowed to see it which really confused me, because it's about me so why can't I see it? (P2, T 330)

Other significant controlling adults were identified:

Been given detention by the SENCo for slouching and couldn't be bothered, and I told her. (P3, T94)

The use of the SEN withdrawal room for any pupils as a room to be removed to following behavioural incidents was also discussed. This room was also seen as a control.

I once flipped at a teacher because she accused me of throwing something and I swore at her. I was removed from the classroom and put in the SEN room. (P1, T 222)

Pressures faced by teachers were described:

We need security guards at school. Some teachers have been hit by students. (P1, T221)

In the cultural web to aspire to:

Teachers could treat us more like adults. (P5, T210)

The need for teachers to reward achievements was also added. Other ways to interest kids with SEN was discussed:

Do something that they enjoy. School is so boring, we need choices. (P3, T126)

Alternative teaching programmes and curriculum, and involving pupils with SEN in developing policies were also highlighted.

We need different Successmaker activities to include sport and music and anything that the kids like. Successmaker could be used in a normal lesson to make it more fun for the students and they would take it in more as they were doing something they like. (P1, T344)

Relax on tests as they get harder every year. We could have chill out time in a room where you could go to listen to music or even have a snooker table there. Have it as a reward to go in there. Have a ticket or certificate for 100% achievement/attendance over four weeks and be able to take a mate with you. (P1, T347)

Sometimes if you're getting bullied at school, telling teachers could make it worse. It would be helpful if there was a room, like in a church confessional, to talk and ask for help, ask what could be done. You could talk to a priest who wouldn't grass on you. Might sound corny, it doesn't need a priest exactly but someone to talk to when you need to. (P1, T339)

5.5.2.6 Rituals and routines

The routine behaviours that members of the school display on a daily basis were described. Emphasis was placed on the inflexible SEN teacher timetables and the schools reluctance to change them:

Had to go to Successmaker, SEN teacher timetable of when teachers were coming in, can't be changed. (P1, T294)

Not easy to change the timetable – teachers put days in to suit them, not you. Teachers think they are more important when it is us that needs the help, not them. (P1, T297)

This was likened to:

Collecting money for charity and then keeping it yourself. (P1, T299)

Review meetings and IEPs were also viewed as regular events that occurred.

Routines were highlighted as:

Encourages bad behaviour 'cos normally you'd get bored doing something and then would do something wrong, get told off and be bored again. (P1, T295)

Other examples of rituals included the weekly ritual of attending Successmaker training programmes and the expectations of the young people for SSA routines:

Going into lessons, we had certain things to do, even if the work was easy, they had to help you even if they knew you could do it. (P2, T369)

Examples described by the young people demonstrate the 'taken-for-granted-ness' about how things happen which is extremely difficult to change. In the web to aspire to, 'how things should happen' was discussed. The flexibility and creativity of the staff, communication and systems working for the pupil with SEN were key aspects for change.

The aspirational stories told about rituals and routines described two-way communication between the staff and pupils, with their views listened to and acted on.

Flexibility and creativity of staff members to create a school that was exciting not boring, and systems working for the pupil with SEN. Teachers would also know when support was no longer required. An ideal routine was described by P4:

The lessons should begin with, like a starter than the main work and you should have something good to end it with, like a little game or something. (P4, T233)

Interviewer response to this:

A bit like a dinner party, starter, main meal and then a pudding? Lessons should be geared towards that? (INT to P4, T235)

5.5.3 Pupil Feedback

Some of the pupils' ratings on how much they had enjoyed the session are recorded below:

INT: *How have you enjoyed the session? (T408)*

P2: *It has been a good way of getting my point across. (T409)*

INT: *On a scale of one to ten with one being you have not enjoyed the session at all, and ten that you have really enjoyed it, where would you put yourself? (T410)*

P2: *I would say nine out of ten. (T412)*

INT: *What would have made it ten? (T413)*

P2: *Probably when I originally found out about it I was really scared and didn't know what was happening. Probably because I didn't speak to you when you first rang up and perhaps I should have done. (T414)*

INT: *On a scale of one to ten, one being this session is terrible and ten being it is brilliant, what would you give it? (T258)*

P4: *Nine, I wanted to answer some more questions. Yes – some things I didn't understand. Do you know when you are explaining stuff, well I didn't know how to explain stuff, just like when I had to explain something, I didn't know how to explain it, it's just not remembering as much. (T260)*

INT: *I am going to ask you a question on a scale of one to ten. So on a scale of one to ten, one being not so good and ten brill, how comfortable were you, what did you feel about your session today? (T180)*

P5: *Nine. (T183)*

INT: *Nine, why not ten? (pause for laughter) Only joking, what would have made it ten? (T184)*

P5: *I don't know really, because I have not minded doing this. (T185)*

INT: *On a scale of one to ten, one being absolutely awful and ten being brilliant, how would you rate the session? (T192)*

P6: *Five. (194)*

INT: *What would make it six? (195)*

P6: *I don't know, some chocolate? (pause for laughter) You could have brought some chocolate. (T196)*

INT: *Chocolate, what are you like? It's just that when doing research we're not allowed to offer incentives in case we're seen as bribing you to take part.*

CHAPTER 6 - ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS ANF RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Chapter overview

The findings are presented in two discrete sections based on the research questions for the study using the semi-structured interview schedule and the analysis of the cultural web. This chapter analyses the data obtained from the interview transcripts and proposes how weaknesses identified might be rectified.

In respect of the semi-structured interviews, the framework allowed for the identification of six identified themes - beginnings, participation, SEN provision and support, relationships, endings and labels. The cultural web has allowed the stories, symbols, power, organisation, controls and rituals and routines that characterise SEN culture to be identified and used to describe culture in the area of SEN and the statutory assessment process.

6.2 Summary of results - research question one

“What are the perceptions of children and young people concerning their involvement in the process of statutory assessment, the issuing of a statement and subsequent ceasing of that statement?”

6.2.1 Beginnings

The analysis of the young people's responses indicated that little participation within the statutory assessment process had taken place. The majority of the young people interviewed were passive participants in the process, 'being done to'. This is contrary to the requirements of the SEN CoP (DfE1994, DfES 2001a), the 1989 Children Act and the 2002 Education Act, all of which state that LAs and other bodies must consult with children and young people when taking decisions affecting them before issuing guidance. This was evidenced by the fact that all of the young people interviewed did not fully understand what a statement was, or even whether they had been the subject of a statement. At the outset there had been no explanation to any of the young people about the statutory assessment process, the statement or its implications, so they could not know its purpose. They were also not asked for their views at the start of the process, i.e. did they want or need a statement?

Although there was limited recall of the details of the original statutory process, when or why it started, or recognition of the words SEN or statement, this may be due in part to the process having started in primary school for all the interviewees, and because it wasn't explained to them. However, this cannot be seen as an excuse because the

various legislation and guidance do not specify a minimum age for listening to children. Moreover, the findings strongly suggest that schools did not even try to consult and involve the children in the process. This is reinforced by the fact that years later the young people still did not understand SEN and statutory assessment systems.

Although schools are required to submit the child's views as part of the statutory assessment process, this research does not demonstrate that the child has given permission or is aware of the implications of the assessment from their own perspective. Schools should have available an induction pack for any child or young person they are considering putting forward for a statement of SEN. As a result of this research, an example 'Good Practice Guide - Introduction to Statutory Assessment', adapted from Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002) and Gersch (1996) has been drafted by one of the young people involved in the research and the author (Appendix 7). Before the LA considers a school or parental request for a statutory assessment, there should be evidence that the pupil has been informed about the process and its implications. The 'Good Practice Guide' checklist or similar could be completed by the school in consultation with the child or young person and parents before a decision is made to proceed. This guide could also be adapted for professionals such as EPs to use prior to starting work with pupils. In addition, an information pack for children and young people about the Council's statutory assessment could be developed. General information about the statutory assessment process and statements could also be posted on the Council's internet site.

6.2.2 Participation (i.e. during the life of the statement)

A common theme arising from the six interviews was that the young people had no recollection of providing any views as part of the statutory assessment process. Although they were aware of the term 'annual review', they were not familiar with the review process. Young people were not active participants in the review meetings they attended and were not equal partners in discussions. The emphasis, even at meetings with the young people present, was between school and parent. Frustration on the part of the young people was identified, as they had things to say but generally were not asked. P2 made reference to a situation where a friend also with a statement experienced something similar and reported that the friend (who also had had an annual review that morning) had said:

'Well I just kind of sat there and my mum did all the talking for me so it's just as if you're not there, but they just don't want to acknowledge that you're actually there.' (P2, T314)

However, the same school did seem happy to discuss issues with a young person (P2) when a parent was not present:

When my mum couldn't turn up, they were asking me all the questions so it felt better to actually be able to give them what I thought instead of my mum saying what she thought. (P2, T25)

Two young people (P2 and P4) indicated that they had seen the statement, but generally were not told what it meant or given the opportunity to comment on the draft version. However there may have been confusion with the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The young people were not aware that there would have been an amended proposed and final statement in year six in preparation for high school.

There also appears to be confusion as to the actual purpose of the annual review meeting, which is to review the objectives of the statement. Some young people (P2, P4) reported that schools appeared to focus on reviewing the IEP and not the statement, as target setting appeared to be a strong factor in reviewing progress. It was also reported by P2 that a SpLD teacher reviewed each new statement and all its targets, so it could not have been the statement. Moreover, P2 and P4 thought that their statement was actually the IEP, as it contained improvement targets. Schools need to be aware that there should be a clear distinction between the review of the IEP and the statement. This may mean that two meetings are necessary.

P2 identified that when given the opportunity to read the statement, it was written in such a way that s/he had difficulty understanding the language used. This might be unavoidable for young children when the statement is originally written but is less acceptable for older children. Therefore statements should be written in a jargon-free way, expecting that the young people will be part of the readership.

Although not explicitly referenced by the young people, one theme that came across to the author was that professionals commonly do things to them not with them e.g. setting their targets, selecting the time of the sessions and deciding the lessons they should be withdrawn from.

I would not have picked a GCSE lesson to come out of as I didn't want to miss anything, you get behind when you have to do this and it is hard to catch up. (P2, T393)

The process of a statutory assessment, including the EP assessment, should provide the school and the young person with a fuller understanding of their learning opportunities, and also a greater understanding of their own educational situation and what actions may be open to them to undertake positive change.

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) could be introduced when the proposed statement is circulated, detailing what the school, the SSA and/or the SpLD teacher, parents and the young person should provide. This would allow all concerned to identify and negotiate the support needed, in which lesson(s), what time the support would be most beneficial and for how long, the skills expected of the staff, their training requirements and those of the young person, what would happen in the event of a staff or pupil illness, attendance targets, impact targets, the work to be covered and complaint mechanisms. The SLA would be different from the current statement and the IEP as it would address the more practical issues of supporting the statemented pupil as distinct from the more formal learning needs. It could be reviewed annually either as part of the annual review process or as a separate meeting.

There are data protection issues in that substantial amounts of information are held on young people about which they are unaware and have not been informed. Whilst this may not necessarily contravene the Data Protection Act itself, it seems to be against the spirit of the Act. Young people and parents should be provided with information on their rights with regard to data protection and the file management of their cases, in terms of who has information about them on file, the access to these files and their rights to read what has been recorded about them. This should not just apply to schools but all agencies working with the child including EP services.

There is some evidence that parents may restrict the voice of the child, in that they are keen for their views to be heard as to what is best for their child. P1 highlighted his/her parent's involvement with school, whilst P2 felt 'invisible' in review meetings with the parent present. This was also evident in a comment made by one parent during a telephone conversation that they had plenty to say about the statement ceasing. Whilst this is understandable, it seems to happen instead of listening to the voice of the child rather than as well as the voice of the child. The child's voice can be excluded from meetings designed to look at their progress and elicit their views. The implicit assumption made by legislation around the voice of the child in recent years is that the 'authorities', should listen more to the voice of the child and take their views into account. However, a potential weakness is that none of the legislation applies to parents, so even if the school and the LA are committed to listening to the voice of the

child, where a parent believes the process is about listening to his/her views, then the voice of the child may be difficult to hear. Schools and other bodies may therefore need to take a more pro-active stance in annual review and other meetings to ensure that the child is able to express their opinions separately from those of their parents. The voice of the child is overridden by the voice of the parent, as evidenced by comments about the young people in the annual review being ignored. A culture shift is required to encourage parents to allow their child to express their own opinion about the support.

6.2.3 SEN provision and support

The ambiguous responses to the question, "How helpful or unhelpful was the level of support provided by the statement?" confirmed the view put forward by Kelly and Norwich (2004) who highlighted that pupils experience "dilemmas over difference" (p.33), reflecting the tension between positive aspects (wanting and appreciating help) and negative aspects (wanting to avoid stigmatising associations). The need to be seen as normal and a lack of independence were negative factors associated with the statement (P1 and P2).

Findings demonstrated that the specialist SEN support provided is not always appropriate when compared to the actual needs of the young people in the survey. For example, some young people were taught in subjects in which they were already competent, rather than those of their primary need. Similarly, there was a tendency to teach SEN pupils in groups. This inevitably means that progress will be at the speed of the slowest, and therefore the frustration of some pupils is understandable. P2 was distracted within the group sessions, whilst P4 was frustrated within the Maths sessions. The needs for which the young people had been given support via the statement were often not met. Within the withdrawal groups, the level of work set was also felt to be too easy, with the work determined by the SENCo. The role of the SENCo against the expertise of an SpLD teacher was questioned, with the SpLD teacher perceiving the SENCo as knowing best and better than the young people. There was evidence that both the SSAs and the SpLD teachers were not stretching the SEN pupils (P1, P2, P3 and P4) – if the young people think that the support or the SpLD sessions are easy options, they may not be motivated to achieve. Where pupils are taught in small groups, they should have personalised programmes to meet their individual needs and not be taught the same curriculum as others with less skills. The focus of the lessons should be the area(s) of SEN as identified in the statement.

Within the classroom context, teachers are still asking SpLD pupils to read aloud, despite knowing that they have difficulties in reading, creating anxiety on the part of the

young people (P4). Continuation of this practice could lead to some young people deliberately refusing to read aloud or to misbehave in order to avoid their literacy weaknesses being demonstrated for all to see.

Within the withdrawal context, three participants (P1, P3 and P5) had at some point chosen not to attend. These attendance and punctuality issues did not appear to be addressed, nor was there any obvious monitoring of attendance or mechanisms to inform or alert parents, or even advise the SEN Service who are funding this support. In the case of P3, s/he had not attended the SpLD sessions for over a year, yet the school still received the funding for that teaching support. This situation clearly needs to be reversed so that attendance and non-attendance at SEN withdrawal sessions is given the same priority as normal classes, and this priority made visible to all concerned. A full register of attendance for these support sessions should be introduced.

There is uncertainty on the part of young people, and possibly parents, about the level of support to be provided by the statement, or how the support is to be provided and in which subject areas. As these issues are not discussed with them, they are unable to say how effective the support provided actually is. They appear unaware of the other SEN support options available in school. P2 said that the statement and support help with confidence and support emotional needs, but not one reference was made to the pastoral systems available in school. As described earlier, an SLA would address this confusion. The pastoral system and the support it provides and how it can be accessed (e.g. mentors, school counsellors, etc) should also be made clear.

A further issue raised by P1 and P2 was the turnover of SSAs and SpLD teachers, resulting in lack of continuity, fragmented relationships and additional time spent consolidating work already done. Similarly, if a SpLD teacher was absent, the young people may not receive their entitlement of specialist teaching until the teacher's return. Whilst the reasons for this were not followed up in this research, schools should make efforts to avoid unnecessary changes in personnel for SEN pupils. When staff are absent, other specialist services should be commissioned to continue the support as schools have the funding to provide locum cover. If the absence is medium or long term, the LA should be informed.

The structuring of the support provided seems largely to centre on the logistical needs of the school and the teachers, not the pupils. Timetabling arrangements often took precedent, meeting the needs of the school and not the needs of the individual pupil.

The young people were not provided with any means to discuss their provision or withdrawal, having to attend withdrawal lessons instead of lessons that were important to them. The timetabling of these should as far as possible be co-ordinated with mainstream lessons and given the same priority in the school timetable. This should avoid timetabling conflicts arising during the year. In addition, there needs to be some mechanism either at the end or start of each term for SEN pupils to input into these arrangements and express their preferences for timing of the withdrawal sessions.

There were clear issues about the role of SSAs in that not only are the young people uncertain about their role, but the findings strongly indicate that the SSAs themselves were unclear. Their age, experience, knowledge and skills in some instances suggested that some were unable to support the young people effectively in lessons, as they themselves had limited understanding of the lesson content and so were unable to challenge them academically, or explain the task requirements and content of a lesson to them. P1 felt powerless to complain and just had to accept it. Conversely, some of the SSAs went to the other extreme and did some of the work for the young people, even when they could do it themselves. This was demotivating and a cause of frustration. In one instance P1 deliberately did not do the work, knowing that the SSA would finish it. The recruitment, skills mix, qualifications and training of SSAs all need to be reviewed in the light of these findings. For young people with statements, the SSAs are in many respects fulfilling a teacher's role but yet do not have a teacher's (or pupil's) background and understanding of the subjects being taught. The possibility of having specialist subject SSAs over a range of curricular areas might be an alternative option. Young people with statements also need a mechanism by which they can complain when they feel that the SSA support is not helping.

There were issues raised in terms of the perceived role of SSAs. P1 saw SSAs as 'minders', and therefore they were inevitably seen as unpopular. Verbal abuse of the SSAs was also highlighted, with one particular SSA being called "stinky" by all pupils, not just the statemented child. As above, this highlights the need to review the role and purpose of SSAs, both inside and outside the classroom. Such a review needs to include young people's perceptions as a key feature.

The statement itself may not be of as much benefit to young people as has generally been assumed by school and parents. P1 demonstrated that the SSA demotivated him/her. P4 could demonstrate the application of coping strategies, but it was not evident whether this was his/her own strategy or one taught by the SpLD teachers. P2 felt that the support from the SpLD teacher did make some difference, but later

recognised that s/he had become dependent on this support. It could be argued that once a statement is issued, this becomes self-fulfilling, possibly encouraging a dependency culture.

6.2.4 Relationships

The analysis of the young people's responses indicated that there was evidence that friends who also had statements were empathic and supportive. Family relationships also appeared positive.

With peers, there was evidence of low level bullying, although little evidence that this was due to having a statement in itself – the name calling appeared to be more specific to the individual person and their relationship with their peers. Merely having a SpLD statement did not necessarily infer bullying would occur.

The analysis of the young people's responses indicated that there was evidence that, although trying to be helpful, some teachers lacked the communication skills and sensitivities to relate to young people with SEN in terms of discussing their needs with them. Some teachers assumed that statemented pupils (including SpLD) were less intelligent, requiring more help, and their attempts to reduce placing pressure on those with statements sometimes resulted in frustration and humiliation for the young person. Instead of trying to stretch and challenge the young person, these approaches could be viewed as further 'disabling' them. SpLD teachers and SSAs supporting pupils with statements could further develop their emotional literacy skills in order to communicate more effectively with them at both an emotional and curricular level. This may improve their sense of self-esteem, self-awareness, motivation and independent decision-making, as well as promoting positive dialogue about having a statement. The acceptance of their dyslexia by others was felt to be crucial in determining how the young people perceived themselves.

6.2.5 Endings

Opportunities to discuss the ceasing of the statement were usually provided both before and during the annual review. Although the statements were ceased due to the progress made and pupils no longer meeting the criteria, there appeared to be no evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of the support as nobody was measuring inputs, outcomes or impacts. In terms of cost versus benefits, no-one can say whether it was the statement and related support that made a difference or whether the young people would have achieved the same without, or with different, support.

Except for the LA, the commonly held view about a statement ceasing is negative, in that parents and schools tend to be reluctant for a statement to cease. However, the findings indicate that the majority of the young people themselves were very happy when the statement ceased, describing their feelings on a continuum from feeling great, being very pleased, together with an increase in confidence. Ceasing the statement was also a culture shock and a big change in preparation for a normal curriculum and a fresh start:

It felt weird not having SpLD lessons no more so, I was so used to having these lessons, it was a big change getting myself used to not having to go there no more. (P2, T171)

The fact that the young people concerned could still access support when needed was helpful and avoided adverse consequences of ceasing the statement. However, none of the young people seemed to realise that they were entitled to this support as they would be deemed to be at School Action Plus or School Action on the CoP. The young people were not made aware of these school based levels of support or what provision was available from within school resources. P6 was angry that the support had stopped and felt that it had reflected negatively on his/her year nine examinations as s/he had not been given additional time.

To celebrate the success of pupils with SEN and to remove statements, or even to reduce the reliance on statements, a culture shift is required. Parents must be involved and work in partnership with their child, school and the LA to ensure that their child's needs are met (with or without a statement of SEN). Whilst the rhetoric of working in partnership with parents supposedly gives them status within the statutory assessment decision making process, the reality is that professional dominance still sets the vocabulary agenda.

These findings may be useful for LAs to use when trying to persuade schools and parents to reduce the reliance on statements. In other words, it is the young people as well as the LA who want the statement to end. A possible improvement arising from the reaction of the young people to the ceasing of the statement is that the statement or related documents should have as a clear outcome, how, and even when, the statement should cease – namely, when a MLD or SpLD statement is first prepared, an exit strategy and target outcomes should be built in from the outset, to end or reduce the statement within a clear timeframe. Moreover, even when the young person has quite complex needs, making it unlikely that the statement would ever be ceased, there

could still be an objective set to reduce the level of support provided by the statement over a specified period of time.

6.2.6 Labels

Labelling did not particularly feature in the findings, although dyslexia as a label was discussed. The lack of others' understanding of what having dyslexia entailed was more of an issue. Three young people described isolated incidents of name-calling and the embarrassment of having to attend SEN withdrawal sessions. P1 described situations where physical and verbal abuse against pupils with a statement for MLD had taken place. The perceptions of how statemented pupils in general were accepted or rejected by peer groups related to the particular SEN they had. P1 recognised that behaviours directed against these pupils were due to their different SEN and physical characteristics, i.e. MLD as opposed to dyslexia. Where young people had a statement for physical, medical conditions or were deemed as "slow" (P1) with obvious different physical characteristics, it was reported that more physical and verbal bullying took place.

There was some evidence that young people with dyslexia were placed in lower, less academic sets (P2), the justification being that these sets had more SEN support due to the SEN population within them (although the other pupils in these sets mainly had MLD or BESD). In one case a teacher reported that the coursework produced by the pupil was at a much higher level than the others in that particular set.

6.3 Summary of results - research question two

"What are young people's perceptions of the SEN culture?"

In Chapter 5, Figure 4, the cultural web included descriptors that characterise the current SEN culture experienced by young people with SEN. This web highlights facilitators and blockages of change. In Figure 5, the SEN cultural web to aspire to highlights what may happen if changes are made.

6.3.1 Stories

Analysis of the current stories from young people with a statement of SEN considered whether the language of SEN perpetuated negative labelling and discrimination, and whether it promoted a low self-image within the pupil as vulnerable, needy or different. There was evidence to demonstrate this, the young people referring to themselves because they had SEN as:

I know I have a disability. (P1, T201)

Feel quite dumb. (P2, T51)

Embarrassed or ashamed. (P5, T179)

There needs to be consideration of whether the statement is a catalyst for the empowerment or disempowerment of pupils with SEN.

As reflected in the interview schedule, sometimes SSAs and SpLD teachers knew less than the pupils. Training for SEN support staff was again identified as an area for improvement. As described earlier, a SLA could identify the skills and qualifications required to support the individual child and subject area content. Training opportunities could be explored for both the young people and support staff to develop areas such as study skill techniques, motivational interviewing, relaxation techniques and management of stress, anxiety, etc. There needs to be more than just teaching basic literacy and numeracy.

The SSAs need to be clear what their roles are in terms of when they provide help and when they let the SEN pupils do the work themselves. The assumption is that the SSAs can provide support in all subjects when in some cases they seem to have limited knowledge of that subject and are therefore unable to effectively support the SEN pupil. They therefore do not 'add value'. The issue is around what skills and qualifications do SSAs need to do their job and have they got them.

The aspirational stories told about skilled and professional SEN support staff, schools communicating effectively and consulting with pupils who have SEN; young people with SpLD would be placed in higher sets with more appropriate lesson content. Arrangements for awareness-raising of SEN would be in place, and pupils and staff knowledgeable with informed understanding of the difficulties experienced by young people with a range of SEN.

6.3.2 Symbols

The current symbols surrounding a young person with a statement of SEN were generally negative. In particular, the isolation of young people with SEN was mentioned as a symbol, especially the withdrawal from the mainstream curriculum and some lack of acceptance within friendship circles.

The statement itself was identified as a symbol and sometimes appeared self-fulfilling, the support reinforcing the young people's view of themselves that they were different, and that other young people saw this. The support added tangible signs of their problems (SSAs, special rooms, transparent SEN folders, SEN workbooks and withdrawal lessons). In addition, it took away work challenges and incentives. The culture shock following the ceasing of the statement demonstrated that in some instances support can create a situation where the balance of dependency and independency has not been achieved. These observations raise the issue that in some respects the statutory assessment process may actually be disabling and preventing inclusion.

The symbols identified also focused on the support needed by the young people. They had not been made aware of the many services (e.g. Connexions) that could also offer support, nor had they had the opportunity to discuss how those services could be accessed or whether a combination of services could be introduced. The young people should be given the choice to commission alternative services, for example, motivational interviewing sessions or GCSE stress management techniques.

The aspirational stories told about an alternative curriculum on offer to SEN pupils and the delivery of SEN training packages for school staff and pupils to promote awareness of the needs of SEN pupils. In addition, young people had the choice of, and access to, alternative 'needs led' packages of support with opportunities to choose provision, the SSA, the lesson content, resources, or whether to be seen by an EP. Up-to-date equipment, materials and resources would also be provided.

6.3.3 Power

The current stories surrounding power were described in detail but generally included the young person being at the bottom of the power chain, not being listened to. They were not normally asked for their views or asked to explain how or whether they thought the support, either SSA or teaching, was making a difference.

The identified behaviours of the support staff and pupil responses to those behaviours, and the language used within the school, not just in terms of jargon and abbreviations but also assuming help needed language, were felt to promote a negative image of SEN. The young people also identified that the use of SEN language could be seen as symbols of a SEN pupil.

The aspirational stories described the wide range of services and learning opportunities available to the young people and schools, with improved communication networks centred on their needs and progress. Flexibility and opportunities for innovation, empowerment of both pupils with SEN and SpLD teachers to change the way they teach should improve the process of statutory assessment for pupils, and engage them in decisions that impact on them.

There is a need to change the assumptions of some teachers (e.g. that pupils will not be embarrassed if their difficulties are highlighted in class, or that if they get a good mark they must have cheated or been helped at home). In the web to aspire to, behaviours and language promote a positive image of SEN, with proactive language and pupils with SEN influencing school policy and practice.

6.3.4 Organisation

In the current SEN cultural web, the organisational structure comprises of a complex hierarchical matrix of which the young people were unaware. Analysis of the current stories surrounding organisation of SEN within the school, and the school itself as an organisation, demonstrated that it was hierarchical with a pecking order of school staff, the SSAs being ranked at the bottom. Focus on work completion rather than on the understanding of it might explain the practice of some SSAs completing work on the student's behalf. The young people were also all aware of the impact on their learning of the accommodation in which they were being taught. This was evidenced by comments that the withdrawal room was on open view to other pupils and on occasions dual purpose; other non SEN pupils could see who was in, who needed help and what work they were doing. Moreover, timetable mix-ups and staff wasting time trying to organise who they were due to support, and young people being withdrawn from GCSE lessons, all also suggested lack of organisation and possibly lack of prioritisation of SEN support activities.

The only ICT development mentioned was Successmaker, although there are a number of literacy, numeracy and voice recognition software packages available to help dyslexic pupils.

The aspirational stories described timetabling flexibility, where the young people could choose the lessons they came out of. This would require the regular availability of SEN support staff, demonstrating responsiveness to the needs of pupils with SEN. The availability of alternative ICT systems would support the needs and develop the skills of all pupils with SEN. As the author had to carefully plan the interview in terms of venue, facilities, etc to maximise the outcome, similar preparations should be planned in schools to provide the optimal learning environment. Suggestions from the pupils included changing the name of the SEN withdrawal room and reviewing its use. Improved withdrawal accommodation was also described, with students involved in selecting lesson materials, books and equipment, and also having a say in the decoration, design and layout of the withdrawal room.

6.3.5 Controls

All the control appears to reside with the school and none with the young person. This is consistent with the comments made about the power and organisation dimensions highlighted above. The SSAs were perceived as 'controlling' the young people through their presence in the classroom, monitoring of work output and task completion.

Lack of confidentiality was felt to be a controlling factor, with none of the young people being aware of their rights with regard to data protection. Reports written about them and the statements were seen to be controlling as they did not have the opportunity to proof-read these documents, provide their views or even be given a copy of a commissioned report. P2 had asked for his/her views to be incorporated into a report but this was refused.

The cultural web to aspire to described pupils as having more control, choice and independence, with teachers treating them as adults, and providing an environment with incentives or systems in place to reward achievement. Alternative teaching programmes would also be available for pupils with SEN. SEN policies and practice would be informed by young people. Mentors would receive training to advocate on behalf of SEN pupils.

6.3.6 Rituals and routines

There was consensus that the 'way we do things around here' was inflexible in that schools seem reluctant to make changes. In terms of the timetable, pupils believed that "it cannot be changed". In addition, there was a tendency for routines to be counterproductive since they could encourage the types of behaviour they were trying to avoid, for example when pupils became bored.

In the aspirational web, schools elicit pupils' views on the quality and effectiveness of the services offered and how they can better involve them in the statutory assessment process. In addition, were the other features of the cultural web dimensions to aspire to described above to be introduced, the rituals and routines would automatically be improved.

CHAPTER 7: RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY AND REFLECTION

7.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines the relevance of the research from the standpoint of the researcher, the profession and the research community. It introduces literature linked to researcher positionality, provides a brief personal biography and reflects on the effects on the researcher of data gathering and interpretation.

7.2 Reflection on the purpose of the research

The research addressed the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of young people about their involvement in the process of statutory assessment, the issuing of a statement, their views about the support allocated to them by the statement and the subsequent 'ceasing' of that statement?
2. What are their perceptions about the culture of SEN?

The author believes that this is a significant and relevant area to address, for herself, the profession and the research community. Work undertaken as part of her doctoral studies (1st and 2nd year modules) supported previous research that pupil participation and the pupil's voice in decisions affecting their lives are not wholly embraced by LAs, EP services, schools or administrators of statutory assessment processes. This is likely to be a significant factor in limiting young people's self-esteem and self-confidence and may adversely impact on their adult life.

From the researcher's own viewpoint, this study is relevant in a number of ways:

- it reviews the effectiveness of communication with young people with SEN and allows them to talk more openly about their SEN;
- it covers a previously under-researched area;
- it aims to answer the question 'what do I want to know at the end of the research that I do not know now?';
- it provides insider information to inform LA and EP service delivery;
- it reviews both the current literature and the experiences of those pupils who have undergone the statutory assessment process, to inform and shape future developments in educational policy and practice in relation to pupils with SEN;
- it seeks to improve statutory assessment experiences and outcomes including greater advocacy, planning and support at the point of the statement being issued;
- it has allowed an autobiographical approach to be used to make clear the positionality of the researcher;

- it has allowed the researcher to reflect on her own life experiences, beliefs and values, and how these have impacted on her as a researcher, including the effects of the impact of conducting 'sensitive' research.

The relevance of this research for the profession includes:

- providing information on whether statements add value for the young people involved;
- consideration of whether the statement is a catalyst for the empowerment or disempowerment of pupils with SEN;
- debate that the statutory assessment process may actually be abusive and prevent inclusion;
- exploring pupils' views on how they can be better involved in the statutory assessment process;
- questioning the culture of how we think about SEN, and how pupils with SEN can have their needs met;
- promoting the view of the EP as researcher and his/her positive contribution to different areas of practice;
- informing educational and psychological theory;
- improving the process of statutory assessment for pupils, and engaging them in decisions that impact on them;
- exploring tensions between schools and/or parents 'wanting' statements and the LA wanting to reduce reliance on statements;
- adding to the debate on the quality of SEN provision in terms of achieving the intended outcomes.

The relevance of this research to the research community will be in the following areas:

- the contribution to the labelling and power discourse, i.e. does negative construction act as a barrier to life experiences and opportunities?
- how business management tools such as the cultural web can be used to elicit views from young people;
- developing insights into young people's experience of SEN within education;
- contributing to what is already understood from previously published research in this under-researched field;
- adding to the increasing accounts and narratives of pupils' SEN school career experiences;
- considering whether the language of SEN perpetuates negative labelling and discrimination, and whether it promotes a low self-image by the pupil of being vulnerable, needy or different.

7.3 Introduction to researcher positionality

Wellington et al (2005), Sikes (2005) and Goodley (1996) advocate that critical reflective practice or auto/biographical and life history work can help better understanding of the researcher's research-related interests, orientations, assumptions and biases i.e. his/her positionality. They also argue that we cannot escape the influence of our own personal histories, and those that have shaped the societies in which we live. We must also acknowledge the interactive relationships between individual lives, perceptions, experiences, beliefs, values and the various identities we negotiate for ourselves. The social, cultural and historical contexts in which we live our lives and our individual motivations and social influences as our baggage and histories also impact on us as researchers.

In contrast to professional researchers, the researching professional as described by Wellington et al (2005) and Lunt et al (2003) is a professional already established in a senior position with an orientation towards praxis, (committed informed practice), who wishes to reflect upon and research their own practice and the political, social and theoretical contexts in which it is located. The author is in this position, with many years of experience, and has reached a senior level of responsibility.

Wellington et al (2005) also argue that as researchers we need to identify how we perceive and experience studying, as this is a significant factor in how we approach all aspects of the research. Wellington (2000) also suggests that being reflective and reflexive are crucial to the conduct of research, demonstrating methodological rigour. However, Troyna (1994) argues that auto-critiques or research biographies in educational research are adopting a confessional tone which is damaging the status of qualitative research.

Reflecting on our own stories, and on how our life experiences have influenced our thinking, is therefore a valuable research approach in its own right, providing critical insight into our own research related beliefs, values and practices. The influences of our social, cultural and historical background, and experiences arising from these, will impact on the research questions identified, the research approach, the analysis and writing of the research. These reflections are an integral part of the research process; for a researcher to identify how the beliefs and values they hold impact on them as a researcher, they must approach research as a lived experience (Wellington et al, 2005). This can be constructed through an auto/biographical story.

Although not intended to be a reflexive account, the purpose of reflexivity has provided an understanding of the process of becoming a researcher. Writing is often labelled reflexive (Troyna, 1994), so a brief auto/biographical approach has been used to inform the thinking of the author as researcher, and to clarify her positionality, as recommended by Wellington et al (2005), and her own self-understanding, as advocated by Beaver (1996). The author has used the framework for a personal life history approach as advocated by Wellington et al (2005). This provides the basis for a reflexive section in this thesis, and also allows the author to explore how her upbringing, educational and life experiences have led to her being on the doctoral programme and undertaking this research. Wellington et al (2005) and Wellington and Sykes (2006) describe human beings as storying beings, and that sense is made of our lives through personal narratives, life histories, and memories which provide the links, connections and coherence of events that happen in our lives. A life story is the story we tell of our life, whilst life history is the life story located within its historical context (Wellington et al, 2005).

This approach has questioned the author's professional and personal values and belief systems in a variety of situations; as a learner; educator and manager, within the framework of how children and young people with SEN are perceived, all of which has influenced the author's own self-understanding. Beaver (1996) suggests that people are active agents who monitor, update and assess their biographies in order to present a certain view of themselves, both to themselves and to other people. This requires the ability to reflect on what one is like and so change the view of oneself.

7.4 Brief personal auto/biography cameo

'How did I get here?' An autobiographical approach and framework for a personal life history (Wellington et al, 2005 p. 23) has been used by the author in this section. To use one's own voice in writing requires writing in the first person; therefore, instead of references to 'the author', 'I' and 'me' have been used in order to emphasize to the reader the influences that have shaped the author as researcher, and also to demonstrate the reflectivity of the author.

7.4.1 Start of the journey

Why?

Although leaving school in July 1976 with only a few formal qualifications, some negative experiences whilst at school prompted the determination to seek further learning opportunities. I knew from an early age (at high school) that, despite not being very academic, I wanted to complete a doctorate, and ever since then have had it on

my 'things in life to do' list (this list also includes running a marathon and learning to play the piano).

Although initially wanting to follow a traditional PhD (due to lack of knowledge and awareness of the professional doctorate option), I chose to undertake the professional doctorate as I wanted to continue working within my own field. Wellington et al (2005) and Lunt et al (2003) suggest that the majority of professional doctorate students want to advance, develop and improve their own professionally related knowledge base and research area, and that this orientation towards praxis was the main reason why I wanted to do it. I successfully put forward a business case for the funding of the doctorate.

Life course

On reflection, the why question was affected by my life course, which in turn was affected by:

- my social class - born into a working class family in the sixties, my father left my mother with four children under eight years of age when I was four years old;
- where I lived - initially brought up in rented two-up-two down terraced accommodation before moving to the local council estate;
- the times I lived in and the stigma associated with one parent families living on council estates. My family's social position was low, as at that time there was only rudimentary social welfare and there was no maintenance support from my father for the family. Although my father initially kept in touch sporadically following the separation, this soon stopped and we never saw him again.
- Sibling effects - my brother attended a grammar school, perceived by others at that time as a posh school. With the change from grammar to comprehensive schools, I attended the same school although it was now a high school. The teachers at this school were traditional grammar school teachers. My brother by now had left and my older sister also attended. She was unlike my brother who was studious and intelligent. He had a caring responsibility for his three younger sisters and was unable to progress onto further education. My older sister, although bright, had no interest in learning and left school at sixteen, pregnant and with no qualifications. When I attended the school, similarities were made between me and my older sister and similar negative expectations assumed. My younger sister chose to go to another local high school and also left school with very few qualifications.

Views of own school experiences

Some negative memories of my school experiences still remain vivid to this day. I can visualise being in a year ten Maths class and sitting at the back of the classroom. Maths had always been difficult and during this particular lesson the teacher noticed that I wasn't concentrating and I wasn't wearing my glasses. He ordered me to the front of the class so that I could see the board, but because I couldn't do the work, he shouted out aloud in front of the class "are you thick as well as blind?" This situation escalated and resulted in me trying to leave the classroom in an emotional state. I can remember those feelings clearly and today I still have a barrier with numbers, especially statistics.

Other situations which I often joke about are the times I got in trouble at school for smoking. I have never smoked in my life. Yet when with other pupils who did smoke at break and lunchtimes, I would always be the one singled out to be sent to the headteacher's room.

Although negative in one way, but positive in another, the following scenario was probably one of the key factors that influenced me as a teacher, psychologist and person. Pupils had to go to school in person to receive their 'O' level results and teachers were present to congratulate pupils who had done well. I felt that I had never been regarded as academic in school, and didn't believe that I would achieve high grades in my 'O' levels. However, I achieved grade 'A's for English Literature and English Language with the rest of my pass grades being 'B's (I failed Maths). I remember rushing up to my English teacher proudly announcing that I had got 'A's', to which he replied "I knew you would". His response puzzled me and I remember thinking "but you've never told me that". It was only later did I realise that he had never given any indication that I was good at these subjects. I also didn't know that his perceptions of me were so high in contrast to other teachers in the school. I had never been an angel and knew that my behaviour with teachers who were unable to discipline or motivate pupils was poor. This impacted on my future teaching style, with me always giving as much praise as possible.

Other perceived prejudices include one of my friends, whose father was the mayor of the town and also a GP, when asked by teachers what she wanted to do when she left school answered "to be a GP". I was never asked. The underlying assumption, of which I was aware, was that teachers expected me to leave school at sixteen and not do well. Ironically, my friend's high expectations were not realised as she failed all her 'O' levels and, despite going into the sixth form, left school with no formal qualifications.

Further learning and teaching experiences

Although some of my friends went into the sixth form at school, many others chose to go to work at sixteen as per their parents' expectations. With my mother's support, I opted to go to the local technical college to complete 'A' levels. Following 'A' levels, I went to university to complete a first degree. I had no intention of becoming a teacher, but after graduation did begin the Post Graduate Teaching Certificate course (secondary), as I was unsure what I wanted to do. I absolutely loved it! I then had a variety of teaching placements, including a private grammar school and, in total contrast, a socially deprived mainstream primary school. After qualifying I had a variety of temporary teaching posts (at this time I didn't drive and had limited access to jobs in other Councils). As a supply teacher, I found that I would often be given lower set classes with a high element of children with SEN and behavioural difficulties. I found that my abilities lay in motivating and managing the challenging behaviour of some of these pupils. During a period as a home tutor I also supported young people (mainly boys) who had been excluded from school. I realised I was most naturally suited to working with the more socially deprived children and young people from working class backgrounds. This gave me the experience to become a full-time SEN teacher in an all-age BESD school. Prior to and throughout my teaching career, I had always worked in the evenings as a youth and community worker, eventually running a youth centre with responsibility for the staff, project work activities and policy development. However, after about six years of teaching and youth work, I realised that something was missing. I went back to university to complete an MA in educational research and a year later began my MSc in educational psychology. Several years later, whilst employed as an EP, I completed an MSc in business management and following that began this doctorate.

The doctoral journey

Memorable occasions on the doctoral course include attendance at the 2003 Barmoor weekend (a study retreat used by Sheffield University as part of the doctoral programme). This experience of being in a learning community gave me a feeling of 'permission' to learn, a feeling I can still physically remember. Although I was on the doctoral course and had started to read and prepare for assignments, it was this therapeutic environment that allowed me to read 'Experiences of Special Education – through Life Stories' (Armstrong, 2003). He was one of the presenters at the Barmoor weekend and his book was available. I read this book whilst I was there. It told the stories of adults who had been in SEN provision and their subsequent negative experiences. It was thought provoking, highlighting how negative constructions of disabled people act as a barrier to life experiences and opportunities, and how

historically personal experiences are linked to the stigma of receiving special education. The adults involved in the research had not been offered the chance when younger to be involved in any decision making, but were perceived as incompetent, passive, voiceless and powerless participants in the special educational provision process. This struck a chord due to my own social background and my construction of negative school experiences. Jackson (2001) highlights the importance of school and education as central experiences of childhood, with the power to shape individual's views of themselves, both negatively and positively, with consequences for the rest of their lives. This weekend planted the seed for this research.

Since starting the doctorate, I have also been influenced by Corbett (1996), particularly her portrayal of special needs through her use of imagery and powerful descriptive metaphors. Literature such as this and others (e.g. Armstrong, 2003, Billington and Pomerantz, eds, 2004) have developed my understanding and realisation that as part of the doctoral process I have had to come to terms with my changing perceptions linked to the emerging new paradigm of childhood. I have also had to reconsider my use of language and my subconscious perception of children and young people with SEN as products to be packaged into the appropriate special needs provision. This is now replaced by the notion of the child as participant with increased recognition of contextual factors.

My research proposal presentation in January 2006 gave the opportunity within the research community for my doctoral cohort to critique my contribution, described in Wellington et al (2005) as the community of practice. I was extremely nervous as I felt that the route on the doctoral journey had changed and that I had got on the wrong bus which was taking me on another journey. The use of this cohort effect, peer learning and community of practice provided the support needed to buy another ticket. The doctoral journey is described as non-linear, messy and unpredictable (Wellington et al, 2005). By January 2007, I was on another bus, developing another research interest, namely that of life history and storying approaches, hence this chapter.

End of the doctoral journey

Writing my story enabled a learning dialogue to take place, which was a powerful and therapeutic process in itself. It was also a dangerous process as it opened up negative and powerful images of my time at school. If, as an adult, powerful feelings and memories are evoked years later through completion of this exercise, this could be the same for the young people involved in my research.

7.5 Researcher positionality

This section acknowledges the researcher's value-laden position, prior assumptions and biases brought to the research. For instance, I believe that ethical considerations are not always taken seriously enough by researchers, and that there needs to be a more rigorous and accountable methodology in place for all researchers working in the educational field with children and young people. In addition, following on from the auto/biographical approach, I believe that my social positioning, perspectives and assumptions informing how I make sense of the world have all had implications for this research process. How our experiences influence the research topics we choose probably began with my experience of 'labelling' due to my working class background, leading to a general sense of failure and academic failure in Maths, with a corresponding self-perception of incompetence. Subsequent expectation of further failure affects the ability and willingness to engage successfully and to later adopt avoidance strategies. My personal experiences have influenced the design and interpretation of this research process, as the aim has been to look at young people who were regarded as failures in an educational world. However, I have also been influenced by the research process.

The purpose of acknowledging my positionality is to help counter the charges of bias often levelled at qualitative research and which could be levelled at me. It is therefore important to note that my prior experiences and my role within the LA could be seen to have a bias towards the findings of the research and the methodology used. My professional interest is in current issues surrounding SEN, including reducing the reliance on statements, the labelling of SEN, the role of the EPS, workforce reform and meeting the requirements of ECM. I was previously the manager of the SEN Service as well as being the PEP, so had a target to reduce the number of statutory assessments issued. I had also been involved in writing the statement exit criteria for the LA. I acknowledge that these professional responsibilities may also impact on the research.

My personal interests have always been in working with young people. As a youth worker, I was privy to conversations with young people about their lives and school experiences. Many of these were problematic for them and included exclusions from school, disaffection with the educational system and lack of motivation. As a youth worker there were limited opportunities to change the system and, on reflection, listening to these experiences partly prompted my career move to becoming an EP.

7.6 Reflection on the research

7.6.1 Insider knowledge – EP versus researcher versus SEN background

A benefit of this research was that as a practitioner I had insider knowledge, was familiar with the schools, had knowledge of the SEN process and the local SEN provision available, therefore enabling easier access to participants. However, it is acknowledged that this could also have prevented access to cases, as parents could have recognised me as the former SEN Service Manager.

I was also a participant observer on the SEN Panel and was involved in reviewing documents to cease statements. I was aware that this positionality could be constructed as affecting or contaminating the research as panel members were not aware of my doctoral research interests. Researchers have a moral obligation to participants and colleagues when undertaking research; attending pupil panel as a participant observer created an ethical dilemma, as potential research participants could be discussed, giving me the opportunity to influence decisions to ensure the 'right' participants. My insider knowledge enabled the identification of the pilot study participant and the population of pupils whose statements had ceased. My previous attendance at some annual reviews also provided the opportunity to introduce the research to parents and young people.

I was also very aware of my previous experiences at SEN tribunals in attempts to reduce the number of statutory assessments, both in terms of tightening the entry criteria and in ceasing statements where children and young people met the exit criteria. However, I felt able to place myself in a relatively neutral position due to my former experiences as a youth worker, where emotional literacy and communication with children and young people was central to my work. Initial concerns that my SEN tribunal experiences may have influenced the findings of the research or impacted on the methodology used proved groundless. My recognition that complete researcher neutrality in this research was not achievable created a challenge for greater researcher reflexivity, which has provided greater insight to the research.

7.6.2 Effects on the researcher - data gathering

Ethical issues have been considered in detail as part of the ethical review and through the use of a pilot study. However, an area not considered was the researcher's own feelings at starting the initial pilot study interview. Although perceiving herself as relatively confident in talking to young people through previous employment as a youth worker, teacher and in her present role of EP, trying to start this interview positively, whilst also affirming that the young person had SEN, was extremely uncomfortable.

This challenged my perceptions of my interpersonal skills, resulting in a degree of personal conflict and loss of confidence leading to reluctance to start the main study.

However, these worries eased in the main research as the completion of the information sheets and discussion with parents prior to sending out the detailed information enabled dialogue to take place with them, and later the young people, so that fully informed consent was given. This alleviated my initial concerns with the pilot study participant when I had to explain why he/she had been chosen.

Although having looked at various checklists for successful communication (Brown and Wragg, 1993, Pomerantz and Pomerantz, 2002 and James, 2004) and at questions linked specifically to special provision (Kelly and Norwich, 2004), I was not prepared for the complexities of the interview process, including my own perceptions of how I was coming across (possibly in a patronising manner) to the young people during the research. This was especially the case during the pilot study. I also found it difficult explaining the statutory assessment process and the cultural web at a level that made sense to the young people. However, this was not surprising given the complexity of these concepts.

Despite initial reservations on how the pilot study interview was conducted, I considered that the method and style of interview chosen were appropriate and so was continued throughout the research. The pilot study was crucial in trialling the questions, for example, when discussing the cultural web analysis, a method was agreed where, if the participant didn't understand a word or concept, he/she would raise his/her hand, and this technique was offered in all the interviews.

Acknowledging at the end of the pilot study interview the difficulties in trying to talk in 'teenage speak' enabled me to revisit the questions and review how they could be adapted for the extended research. The devil's advocate strategy (Harris and Sutton, 1986) was used to examine and check constructs and evidence using the pilot study participant to share and bounce off ideas. For example, I went through the transcript with the young person, checking out his/her constructs against my use of language and his/her understanding of it.

Although I developed a positive relationship with all the research students, I was aware that my relationship with the pilot study participant and his/her mother and the possible perception that I had been the instigator for "getting rid of the SSA" may have meant

that he/she wanted to please me or present an ideal self (Begley 2000). However, the Likert Scale (1932) findings provided positive feedback, and I was heartened by findings (James, 2004) that a researcher's own competence, interpersonal qualities and attributes also help determine the quality of interaction with the young person.

CHAPTER 8 – CRITIQUE, SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

8.1 Chapter overview

The following summarises the chapters within the thesis. The research limitations and proposed future research are identified and key issues that have arisen throughout the research are discussed.

8.2 Literature review

It is evident from Government policy, research and literature that children's rights have gained much political, legal and ethical momentum during the last twenty years. There remain concerns, however, that such rhetoric is not embedded into everyday practice within services working with children and young people from marginalised groups, including those with SEN (Knight et al, 2006). Research focussed directly on the educational experiences of children and young people with a statement of SEN, although growing, is still relatively sparse (Todd, 2000, 2003a,b,c), partly due to the practical barriers that children and young people face in having their voices heard, and the need to develop alternative tools for consultation. Other barriers preventing effective consultation are the current methodology and research frameworks and the many ethical considerations required when undertaking research with children and young people with SEN.

This literature review aimed to establish what research has already been done with children and young people with SEN, and to build on what is already known and understood from this research. There is limited research with some of the most vulnerable children and young people, namely those who have required a statement of SEN. It appears that the views of pupils in cases where a statement has ceased are not recorded at all in the literature. Findings demonstrate that the quality and effectiveness of EP services and other agencies in promoting the voice of the child has increased. However, it is noticeable that within the literature reviewed, little consideration has been given to how children and young people were informed of their SEN, their involvement and experience in the statutory assessment process and the value of the support provided. It is important to listen to children and young people describing their own SEN experiences and their views of events that led to the statement being issued (Middleton, 2004), their perceptions of how others see them as a statemented person and what helps or limits their ability to improve their situation.

However, current legislation and Government publications mark step change approaches that require LAs to listen to the voice of the child and to promote

participation and inclusion as part of their core values. Although these documents are targeted at professionals, they make limited reference to how pupils can influence their own participation (May, 2005). In addition, the emphasis on consulting with children and eliciting their perspectives on a range of subjects chosen by adults may restrict the children from sharing their views on topics of interest to them, and also making the child reliant on professionals for the agenda. This may have implications for the accurate interpretation of their response.

8.3 Ethical challenges when involving children and young people in research

The author believes that ethical considerations are not always taken seriously enough by researchers working with children and young people, and that more accountable and rigorous methods should be put in place. However, doing research 'by the book' is difficult; it lengthens the timeframe of the research and involves more detailed planning to ensure anonymity and confidentiality; the author cannot just pick up the phone, write a letter to a parent or access a child as would normally be the case.

It is in the area of educational psychology, and in particular research with young people, that the four key principles, statements of values and associated standards of the BPS Code (2006) have been used to evaluate the ethical standards of this research and the author's compliance with this guidance. The author believes that this approach, although time-consuming, is necessary to maximise the value of the research. The difficulties are outweighed by the benefits and improved the quality of the research.

Although actual ethical dilemmas faced by researchers and how these are addressed are not generally highlighted in the literature, the author has critiqued a number of areas. It was difficult to maintain total privacy and anonymity for the young people involved. In terms of gaining consent, limited access to telephone numbers (usually available from the school) meant that the research was placed in jeopardy. The telephone conversations with parents meant time had to be spent gaining their approval prior to getting the young person to agree. On a number of occasions the author had to attempt to contact the parents from work; this meant that on redialling last numbers it would show as number withheld which could create issues in itself. At other times the author had to leave her home telephone number to avoid parents or young people ringing the office and so compromising their anonymity. However, this could have created safeguarding issues for the author in the event that a participant (or their parents) was dissatisfied with the interview and feedback provided. One further complication was how the school should fit into this research; the scenario described in

Chapter 3 demonstrated that one school felt that they should have been informed about the research being undertaken with one of their pupils (3.5.1.3.3).

Although the participant information sheet was discussed before the interview started, responses from three young people suggested they did not know what a statutory assessment was, and therefore reiterating this may possibly have made them more aware of a problem they didn't know they had.

Although attempting to obtain feedback about how participants felt during the sessions, one young person gave a rating of five because chocolate had not been brought; was this a true reflection of how he/she viewed the session, or had their expectations been raised?

Although the author has reflected on the complexities faced during the research, recognising limits of competence and identifying potential ethical dilemmas that could occur, she sought to rectify them by completing a risk and impact assessment, and through discussions with her supervisor. However, the risk assessment was probably too generic and didn't allow for the author to share her whereabouts, creating issues regarding how to maintain confidentiality when working. Other logistical issues were linked to interviewing pupils during the school day; in order to do this, the author had to visit the school, or alternately the pupils would have to leave the school premises. In this case, both researcher and participant would need to give reasons why. For these reasons, three interviews took place at the pupils' homes, although this meant a parent was present during one interview. This parent provided feedback on the questions and stated that both herself and her child should have had a copy of the interview questions prior to the interview in order to prepare for it.

There are differences in the ethical behaviours required when researchers are completing research to those behaviours observed in working practice. There is no requirement for professionals such as educational psychologists to conform with such 'rigour' or to demonstrate the lengths that they have gone to ensure the safety and well being of the young people they are involved with. It appears that ethical protocols in research are in advance of working practices.

In the author's opinion reasons that have prompted organisational heightened interest in ethical considerations is the increasing prevalence of solicitors operating on a 'no win', 'no fee' basis. The author suspects that the origins of the energy for ethics

procedures have been encouraged by lawyers and insurers in response to allegations of misconduct or litigation, also possibly fuelled by data protection requests.

8.4 Methodology

The interview schedule was difficult to administer in terms of the sensitive and potentially psychologically harmful subject matter. Moreover, it was more difficult still trying to initially describe the cultural web concept to the young people. A cultural web is based upon a paradigm and trying to explain the term paradigm meant that the author had to develop ways of expressing this in simple terms.

Silverman (2006) highlights that interviews do not necessarily provide facts e.g. in this research the young people were unable to provide dates of significant events relating to the statutory assessment process.

Although only a relatively small sample was used in the research, it proved extremely time-consuming to transcribe the tape recordings and to analyse the data. The taped sessions provided qualitative feedback about the content of the sessions, including the level of engagement, interest and enthusiasm shown. However, on two recordings some responses were inaudible, although notes made during the sessions supplemented the transcripts.

Computer analysis and software applications could have made this process more efficient, e.g. 'ATLAS.ti' used by Pomerantz and Pomerantz (2002). However, although this particular type of data analysis and the use of 'Dragon 8' voice recognition software were investigated, the author considered that her existing information technology skills meant that she could not adequately learn the new techniques within the timeframe of the research. In addition, use of 'Dragon 8' software would involve training the computer to understand the 'user' voice, mainly that of the young people, thus creating further methodological, participation and ethical considerations to be addressed. The use of computer analysis would also have meant losing the human impact, although Cohen et al (2000) also argue that by breaking transcript data down into its constituent elements, the sense of the whole interview can be lost. They also note that a key problem with transcription is that it becomes a record of data, rather than a record of a social encounter, and that it overlooks important contextual information such as visual and non-verbal cues.

There are some limitations in the use of qualitative methods and the collection of qualitative data because of the reliance upon participants to provide as honest and as

accurate information as possible. In addition, factors such as power differentials and the interview setting may have influenced the participants' responses.

The validity of qualitative research can also be questioned, as problems of anecdotalism may occur where the researcher makes no attempt to analyse unclear or contradictory findings, instead providing their own selected examples of material which support their argument (Silverman, 2006). He also suggests that interviews may be criticised as they do not tell us directly about people's experiences but provide indirect accounts of those experiences.

Semi-structured interviews are more flexible than standardised interviews and so may result in a lack of comparability from one interview to the next. This makes the analysis of these interviews more difficult and time-consuming.

As demonstrated in this research and in the literature, although benefits are apparent in ensuring that the voices of children and young people are heard, there is a danger of eliciting pupil voices without a proper consideration of the methodologies, potential ethical dilemmas and the practicalities involved. Active steps need to be taken to elicit young people's perspectives, so that they have properly planned opportunities to say what they think, feel and want. Even more so with young people for whom there are already difficulties in communication related to their age or type of SEN.

8.5 Data collection and results

This chapter considered the accounts of young people who previously had been identified with SEN resulting in the issuing of a statement. Information was collected through the use of a semi-structured interview and cultural web analysis. The voices of these six young people were recorded and used to draft two cultural webs (Figures 4 and 5). Figure 4 identifies the realities of the circumstances the young people faced and the organisational (school) processes, and are further interpreted (Figure 5) into a web to aspire to. The chapter highlights the ways that professionals can develop questions and questioning techniques to elicit more in-depth views from young people. The techniques used enabled the young people to share their recollection of experiences of the SEN system, their feelings and daily experiences living with a statement of SEN, and the evaluation of support provided via the statement, and to make suggestions for interventions and change. They have provided a unique insight into how to improve these experiences for other children and young people in similar positions.

8.6 Findings and analysis

The two research questions, together with a summary of the findings, are presented below:

1. What are the perceptions of young people about their involvement in the process of statutory assessment, the issuing of a statement, the benefits of the support allocated to them by the statement and the subsequent ceasing of that statement?

The majority of the pupils indicated they had no knowledge relating to the start of the statutory assessment or their involvement in the initial issuing of the statement. There were mixed views on how useful the pupils found the support provided by the statement. The pupils have not provided a clear picture of how useful they perceived the support offered by SSAs or the SpLD teachers. Some indicated that the SpLD support ultimately had helped as they had made progress, whilst some highlighted the ineffective use of, and poor quality of the support provided by the SSAs. These issues were viewed as sensitive by the young people although they felt powerless to share their concerns. The pupils identified concerns with support staff with regard to expectations, work pressure (or lack of), the inflexibility and the lack of coordination of timetabling arrangements. In terms of the statement ceasing, all of the pupils interviewed felt positive about this.

2. What are their perceptions of the SEN culture?

Although the pupils experienced some negativity linked to their difficulties, they appeared to have overcome these. The culture surrounding SEN, described in detail in the cultural web analysis, highlights the need for improved systems and structures.

In addition, this research has helped the wider picture to be seen from the perspective of a direct customer of SEN Services, particularly from those in receipt of a statement, including the SpLD teaching and SSA services available. The research also captured the complexities of organisational behaviour that are informal, unusual, secret and illicit. For example, the SpLD teacher stating the SENCo knows best, young people's dislike and negativity about the support available and regarding SSAs as a demotivating factor in their approach to school life. Young people also suggested that staff were incompetent but believed nothing could be done. It captured the tensions between subject teachers and placement of SpLD pupils in lower sets resulting in reduced performance.

8.7 Reflection

The author completed an autobiographical account of her educational and life experiences, describing the factors that prompted the doctoral journey and research. This proved to be a cathartic experience. The influence of the author's personal history and positionality is acknowledged as shaping her outlook on the research. The author critically examined and acknowledged the interactive relationships of her perceptions, beliefs, constructed identity, individuality, baggage and histories that had impacted on her as a researcher. The doctoral journey, including the autobiography, was not fundamentally about change, but rather about bringing understanding of the process, changing the author's construction of her own role and practice. However, the author has concerns that the process of asking young people to recall events linked to SEN may be analogous to the author's own experiences, in that this may bring back similar negative memories of childhood and schooling.

8.8 Research limitations

The author acknowledges that the young people's ability to recognise and make sense of SEN events was based on past, but relatively recent, SEN experiences and beliefs. Individual experience can be explained in terms of cognitive models that are built over time to help make sense of their situation (Johnson et al, 2005). The benefits of the cultural web are that the young people related problems to prior events, compared and interpreted these events, and used these as a basis for decision making based on their prior expectations. The disadvantages are that preconceptions can occur as sense is made of their new experiences in the context of past school or personal experiences, both negative and positive. The interpretation of events and issues in terms of prior experience is bound to take place as it is unrealistic to expect that events can be approached entirely dispassionately and objectively. There will be different interpretations and preconceptions depending on past experience, so the cultural web to aspire to has to be considered in terms of the young people's past.

The author recognises that the views recorded in this research only relate to six young people, and may not necessarily reflect the views of the entire cohort of pupils where a statement has ceased. She has not balanced this research with contributions from every category of SEN, although the pilot study subject with the diagnoses of ADHD, BESD and SpLD provided a unique insight into his/her experiences. Although each young person interviewed had similar SEN, they held a different perception of their journey through the SEN process. Those with different SEN, e.g. MLD or autism, may perceive the route differently than those with SpLD. However, the complex experiences

faced by young people with SEN mean that conclusions drawn are likely to be relevant to other pupils with SEN.

8.9 Contribution of this study to the existing body of knowledge and understanding relating to student voice.

From the researcher's own viewpoint, this study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge and understanding relating to student voice in a number of ways. It has contributed to the social model of disability debate, in that young people with SEN and statements of SEN experience marginalisation from mainstream activities. This marginalisation can be taken-for-granted by the young people themselves, schools, parents and professionals. This research has attempted to illuminate pupils' views around this issue whereby SEN provision (via a statement) effectively excluded them from their peers, the curriculum and social opportunities. This also informs the inclusion debate, whereby a deeper understanding of the control and regulation of children by professionals advocating and supporting entry into a 'disabling' culture also results in the exclusion of children and young people.

Institutional theory, informed by organisational culture and change culture theory, has been used via the cultural web with young people with SEN allowing their views to be heard in order to inform strategy development within organisations and encourage the more effective management of SEN. The unique deployment of the cultural web model has identified ways in which young people can express their views in a way that informs strategy development, and can change the taken-for-granted assumptions about their needs. It is a means of identifying something better for these young people in a socially constructed disabling world.

This study informs social learning theories of motivation and self-determination whereby the children and young people in the research expressed the need to experience autonomy and choice in decision making and to have a say in the ways in which their SEN were met. The young people in this study were affected by their environment, and their own observations suggest that their expectations of school staff were significant factors in determining their motivation and behaviour.

In terms of educational policy, the research provides a broader understanding of the social and political context in which SEN is constructed, and the need for pedagogical practices in high schools for young people with SEN to be reviewed. The reform of SEN systems through the voice of the consumers of these systems has added to the schools and the social construction of SEN debate.

8.10 Potential further developments

The research could be developed further using the theme of the statement as a catalyst for the empowerment or disempowerment of children and young people with SEN. Their journey into and out of SEN could be further documented using autobiographical or insider approaches, looking at the celebration of their progress and whether the statement inhibited opportunities in educational achievement. As identified by the House of Commons Select Committee (2006), there is a need for more extensive longitudinal research addressing issues of provision and aspects most likely to contribute to the best outcomes for children with a range of needs. As this Committee also stated that children may have a statement throughout their school life, it would be useful to further explore this, as well as the average number of years for which a statement is usually held, including the numbers of statements that never end as a percentage of the total. With the increased focus on reducing reliance on statements, this research could be further developed to provide information whether statements add value for the young people involved.

One of the main findings of the research, which from the author's viewpoint was unexpected, was that there are clear issues about the role of SSAs and their effectiveness in helping achieve the objectives of the statement. A more specific piece of research concentrating on the role and effectiveness of the SSAs in meeting the statement objectives could be undertaken.

8.11 Discussion

The basic criterion for selection in the research was that pupils had had a statement of SEN, and that they would therefore have a wider experience of special educational provision and be more able to express their views about their statement. This research has developed the narratives of young people who have experienced having a statement of SEN from an early age. It was undertaken to gain a deeper and shared perception of their SEN educational experiences. These stories have provided a unique insight of the construction of SEN through the eyes of children and adolescents and have allowed their voices to be heard without "authoritative, political interference or misinterpretation" (Armstrong 2003). Listening to these voices should influence the perceptions of professionals, giving a greater shared understanding and contribute to organisational change in schools. The research contributes to what is already understood from previously published research in this under-researched field. Many of the findings from this study are similar to those of other researchers highlighted in the literature review whose research focused on involving children and young people with SEN in decision-making. It also adds to the increasing accounts and narratives of

pupils' SEN school career experiences. The author believes that using the voices of young people whose statements have ceased has added to the literature surrounding the labelling and inclusion debate, as it has 'teased out' pupil views about the quality of the services offered to them, and from their perspectives highlighted significant weaknesses in service provision, particularly in terms of outcomes for them as 'customers'. Although this was not the original focus of the research, it has revealed that the actual quality of service provision appears to be mixed.

Although there has been an increase in recent years in listening to the voices of pupils and encouraging pupil participation in many aspects of education, this has not generally happened in the area of SEN, and specifically where the ceasing of statements has occurred.

This research has been relevant in a number of ways as it has opened lines of communication with young people with SEN, and given them the opportunity to talk more openly about their SEN and their feelings of having a statement that ceased. It is an original and unique piece of research, as to the author's knowledge this research has not been covered previously. It has provided insider information that can be used to inform the LA, schools, SEN and EP Service delivery, and also to improve statutory assessment experiences and outcomes including greater advocacy, planning and support at the point of the statement being issued. The outcomes of this research should have a positive impact on the future direction of research into young people and SEN, reducing reliance on statements and enabling young people's views to inform SEN systems, school and EP current practice. As stated in Chapter 2, this research also has identified a number of underpinning themes including the effects of social constructs such as SEN, labelling and stigma, the implications for professional practice, the value and benefits of special provision, bullying and child protection issues, disempowerment and disengagement from the SEN system. The research has also contributed to the labelling and power discourse (i.e. does negative construction act as a barrier to life experiences and opportunities?), and suggests that in this research the young people interviewed did experience some negativity towards them.

Completing the cultural web exercise allowed young people to identify symbolism within a SEN culture and those symbolic rituals allowing or preventing change. It has also been a useful tool for the author to help make sense of the SEN culture experienced by them, and the changes required within their school systems. It has enabled the author to have a greater understanding of, and increased ability to promote change in this area through the voice of the child. The web has provided a theoretical

model including a strategic overview which can be shared with the LA, SEN and EP Services and school colleagues. Research findings will enable greater attention to be given to both customer satisfaction, the customers being children and young people, and ways in which to improve service delivery across a range of services. In addition, this will enable productive discussions to take place across Children's Services departments to ensure further consultation can take place about the evaluation of measures in terms of cost, time and effectiveness of the support currently offered to all pupils with SEN.

The cultural web has expanded the ways of communicating with young people, facilitating good quality conversation and ideas to promote change in what is often classed as a rigid system. This type of research can help schools to understand young people with a statement of SEN, their actions, reactions and responses in the context of their daily SEN life in school. The information obtained initially provided information about individual experiences, but also raised a number of whole school issues. The pupils involved provided a rich source of information about schools as social systems, highlighted individual, social and emotional needs, and also reflected the way in which the school as a system reflected and met (or did not meet) those needs.

This research questions the culture of how we think about SEN and how pupils with SEN can have their needs met. Many of the assumptions and beliefs about providing a statement of SEN are rarely talked about, but influence the way that the SEN services approach and conduct their business. There is a need to 'surface' these assumptions and beliefs and consider what each assumption discounts or overlooks. These are assumptions which are taken-for-granted and unlikely to be seen as problematic, although problems arise if significant change in the organisation is needed or expected, e.g. LAs are now expected to concentrate more on using funding for the prevention of SEN rather than issuing statements. The problem is the core assumptions of the SEN paradigm as described in Figure 3. The taken-for-granted assumptions and behaviours in the school as an organisation will be difficult to change precisely because they are taken-for-granted meaning the organisation might therefore find itself unable to adjust to such changes. The research with young people did not explore the tensions between schools and/or parents wanting statements, and the LA agenda to reduce reliance on statements. It therefore does not add to the debate on the quality of SEN provision in terms of achieving intended outcomes. However, the core assumptions of the SEN paradigm described in more detail in Chapter 5 and the taken-for-granted assumptions and behaviours in a school as an organisation, requesting statutory assessments to support school budgets, will be difficult to change because they are taken-for-granted, and the school might therefore find itself unable to adjust to such changes.

For change in an individual to occur, s/he needs to own their own difficulties and understand them before attempting to solve them. Implicit therefore is the need to participate with young people in order to promote ownership, empowerment and understanding of their SEN. However, much of the research would suggest that for a large number of young people the very opposite occurs. This challenges both the educational/special needs system and professional practice. Whilst legislation and policy is observable, good practice is not always viewed on a daily basis.

However, the key issues associated with the voice of the child would include reference to the benefits and difficulties involved in gaining access into the personal worlds of young people, the development of that knowledge and the role of professionals in helping students gain an understanding of their own experiences and potential barriers to learning. Whilst legislation and policy is apparent, the evidence at the level of the young people would suggest more of a variable uptake amongst professionals in education.

To act on the recommendations identified in this research and to develop pupil participation and the voice of the child, there are implications for the ways in which SEN and EP services operate. EP services in particular may be prevented from moving the voice of the child and pupil participation agendas forward due to competing LA corporate priorities such as achieving top quartile scores in government-led performance initiatives, the Audit Commission's Annual School Survey and the recently introduced APA and JAR assessments.

Analysis of the data suggests that the pupils gave information which appears to be honest, accurate and balanced reports of their experiences and perceptions. The findings to be shared with colleagues are based on first hand information from pupils who have recently been involved with the SEN systems and culture.

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Appendix 1 – Request for consent letter and participant information sheet

Executive Director of Children's Services

Our Ref

Your Ref

Date

Please ask for Laretta Walker

Direct Line

Direct Fax

E-Mail

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES
DEPARTMENT**

**Director of Inclusion and
Healthcare**

Dear

My name is Laretta Walker, and I am the Principal Educational Psychologist for XXX. I am also currently undertaking a Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Sheffield University. The final part of my Doctorate involves carrying out a piece of research in an area not previously studied and where little information is available.

The subject of my research is to ask young people who have been involved in the statutory assessment process and whose statement has now ceased about their ideas on how we might improve special needs services. This will help inform Local Authority policy and practice and hopefully improve the statutory assessment process in the future.

I am writing to inform you that I would like to involve your son, X, in the research. However, before you decide it is important for you to understand why I am doing this research and what exactly it will involve. I have therefore enclosed an Information Sheet which provides further details about the purpose of the research. If, after reading the sheet, you are in agreement could you discuss this with X to see whether or not he would like to take part. Participation in the research is entirely voluntary and X may change his mind at any time.

If X is happy to be interviewed, could he sign the Participation Consent Form and return one copy to me in the pre-paid envelope provided. I will then contact X to arrange an interview at a venue agreed with him. The interview should take about one hour and I would like to record it on audio tape if X is agreeable. If necessary I can pay reasonable travel expenses.

If you have any queries about this, please contact me on xxxxxxxx.

Yours sincerely



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

**LAURETTA WALKER
HEAD OF PSYCHOLOGY AND LEARNING SERVICE**



Participant Information Sheet

I am inviting you to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why I am doing the research 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 whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Research subject: An investigation into young people's perception of Special Educational Needs where they have had a statement of Special Educational Needs which ceased.

The purpose of the research: To discuss your views on the statutory assessment process and how you were helped in school. Whilst the views of professionals involved in Special Educational Needs have been recorded, there is little information about how the young people themselves view Special Educational Needs and the statement.

I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Sheffield University. The final part of this is to carry out a piece of research in an area where little information is available. My research started in January 2006 and will finish in March 2007. I am going to ask 6 young people to take part in this research.

Why have I been chosen? I am asking you to take part as you have had a statement of Special Educational Needs which was recently ceased by the Local Authority.

Do I have to take part? Taking part in the research is entirely up to you and you can refuse to take part if you wish. If you do decide to take part I will give you this information sheet to keep and ask you to sign a Consent Form. If you decide to take part, you may stop at any time.

What will happen to me if I take part? I will interview you for about one hour and, if you agree, I will tape record it. We will agree where the interview will take place and can pay reasonable travel expenses if necessary. The interview will involve answering a number of questions related to your experiences on having a statement of special needs.

What are the benefits of taking part? Whilst the research will not benefit you directly, this research will lead to better knowledge about what young people think about Special Educational Needs. This will help Local Authority policy and practice and may possibly improve the statutory assessment process in the future. You will be able to take satisfaction in having made a contribution to research in the area of education and special needs.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? There may be some anxiety before the interview and you may find some of the questions uncomfortable to answer, especially if you had any negative experiences in school. If this happens, please say so immediately and we can discuss how to continue.

What happens at the end of the research? I will send you a draft copy of the section or chapter you helped me to write, so you can agree that it is accurate before

I write the final version. If you want to read the final completed report, I will make it available to you.

What if you are unhappy with something? If you are unhappy with anything, please let me know as soon as possible and I shall try to sort it out. However, if you wanted to complain, the complaint will be handled in line with the Authority's complaints procedures. I will also send an 'Unforeseen Event' report form to my University.

Will my taking part in this research be kept confidential? I will keep all information about you strictly confidential. Your name, address and school will not be included in the research, so that nobody could recognise you. I will refer to you by another name in the research itself (a name of your own choosing).

What will happen to the results of the research project? The results of the research will be presented to the University. I will also have a copy. Should it be published in an academic journal at a later date, I will contact you about this to ask your permission for your contribution to be included.

Who has reviewed the research? Sheffield University's Research Ethics Committee has approved this research proposal, and I have followed the University's Ethics Review Procedure.

Contact for further information: If you need to speak to me, my direct line is 0161 253 6408. If I am not there, please leave a message on my voicemail and I will return your call. If you need to contact me in writing, please mark the envelope 'Personal & Confidential' and I will open it personally.

Thank you for reading this document and hope you will agree to help me with my research.

Lauretta Walker
Head of Psychology & Learning Service

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: An investigation into young people's perception of SEN where they have had a statement of SEN which ceased

Name of Researcher: LAURETTA WALKER

Please initial box

- 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet for this research and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.
- 3. I understand that my responses will be kept confidential at all times.
- 4. I agree to take part in this research.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Copies:
One copy for the participant and one copy for the researcher

Appendix 2 - Risk assessment matrix

EPS RESEARCH - RISK ASSESSMENT/ ACTION PLAN

REF:	1	Event	Consequence	Impact
		<p>Conducting qualitative research on young people with SEN, & the Statutory Assessment process.</p>	<p>1. Failure to safeguard the young person involved. 2. Failure to ensure confidentiality. 3. Multiple relationships - responsibilities to sponsors of research. 4. Research issues eg failure to obtain consent. 5. Unethical behaviour. 6. Occurrence of ethical difficulties. 7. Failure to safeguard researcher. 8. Failure to comply with data protection.</p>	<p>1. Formal complaints &/or misconduct accusations leading to loss of reputation. 2. Young people identified in the research. 3. Quality of research findings compromised - findings at 'odds' with sponsors of research. 4. Research compromised. 5. BPS & profession brought into disrepute. 6. Research compromised. 7. Researcher harmed. 8. Allegations made against researcher.</p>
		<p>Will help achieve the Councils Priority:</p>	<p>Will help achieve the Strategic Partnerships Team Ambitions</p>	<p>Officer Responsible L. Walker</p>
		<p>Better opportunities for children and young people</p>	<p>The place to live in Greater Manchester</p>	<p>Date of Risk Assessment Aug-06</p>
		<p>Improved cultural and sporting opportunities</p>	<p>Area where people feel safe and secure</p>	<p>Date of Review Jan-07</p>
		<p>Putting customers first</p>	<p>Healthiest borough in the North West</p>	
		<p>Strengthened communities</p>	<p>Popular visitor destination</p>	<p>Residual Risk Accepted? (Highlight Cell) Yes</p>
		<p>Choice of quality housing</p>	<p>Premier retail town in the North</p>	
		<p>Cleaner, Safer, Greener</p>	<p>Centre of excellence for education</p>	
		<p>Improving town centres and neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Each township thriving</p>	<p>If residual risk not accepted what approach has been agreed (Highlight Cell)</p>
		<p>Promoting healthier living</p>	<p>Area with first class services Quality jobs for local people</p>	

No	WITHOUT OR WITH EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES ALREADY IN PLACE - To mitigate the threat or take advantage of the risk opportunity	Control Measures in place Likelihood / Impact			FURTHER AGREED CONTROL MEASURES - To be applied to reduce the Impact or Likelihood and deadline date for completion	Residual Risk Likelihood / Impact			Responsible Officer	Review	Target risk rating = Likelihood x Impact
		Impact = 1 - 4 score	Likelihood = 1 - 4 score	Risk Rating Score = Impact x Likelihood		Impact = 1 - 4 score	Likelihood = 1 - 4 score	Risk Rating Score = Impact x Likelihood			
1	Current position - pilot study undertaken.	3	3	9	Further emphasis on safeguarding awareness in research				L.Walker	Sept. 06	2
2					National Equality Standard & Impact Assessment considered (Race Relations Act)				L.Walker	Aug. 06	2
3					Reflective practice and peer support.				L.Walker	Jan. 06 & ongoing	2
4					Informal consultations as part of the Diversity Working Group				L.Walker	Mar. 06 & ongoing	2
5					Ensure ethical guidelines brought to attention of sponsors of research.				L.Walker	Jan. 06	2
6					Establish a cost/risk-benefit analysis including both short & long term consequences				L.Walker	Sept. 06	2
7					Establish criteria for excluding young people in the research - e.g. if young people state that they do not want to take part.				L.Walker	Sept. 06	2
8					Young people appear distressed by the nature of the research, appears uncooperative & unfriendly/ appears not to trust the researcher				L.Walker	Ongoing	2
9					Identify specific closure techniques to be used				L.Walker	Oct-06	2
10					Develop & maintain a comprehensive awareness of professional ethics, incl. the 2006 BPS Code & 2004 BERA.	2	1	2	L.Walker	Ongoing	2

Appendix 3 – Potential delays and delay prevention strategies

Potential Delays	Delay Prevention
Parents and/or pupils not giving consent.	Detailed consent form and letter providing contact details for clarification of the research. All pupils and parents to be reassured that the final version will not identify them.
Organisational logistics such as time, venue, etc – parents/pupils unavailable.	Alternative dates to be left free in case of participants' absences/rooms not available. All interviews to be undertaken at a place and time negotiated with the interviewee.
Ineffective time management of the researcher.	Research diary kept for reflective practice to take place, allow thinking to develop, mature, and allow reflection time.
Delays due to time consuming transcription of tape recordings.	Investigate voice recognition software, eg 'Dragon 8'.
As this is a piece of action research, the research direction and outcome cannot be predicted with absolute certainty.	Monitor the direction of the research and seek advice from university tutor.
Limited access to young people eg not being granted access (parental gatekeepers) or conditions stipulated for access make it difficult to collect or use the data.	July – August identified as the best time to transcribe and write up as less pressure of work.
Research to be extended to other subgroups if pupils unwilling to participate, eg teachers, SENCos, SSAs etc will require different data set questions – different subgroups would bring in different dimensions requiring different analysis.	Keep the research manageable. A realistic schedule is required. A Gantt chart was compiled (appendix 5) to ensure effective time and resource management. This provides a record of the main actions carried out during the completion of the research and specific milestones.
Requirement of further research or training for the author in specific techniques required for the research, especially in the area of competency in 'talking and listening' to children and young people (Wellington et al 2005) or ICT.	Identify further training requirements and link into LA/service continued professional development training plan.
Cost and practicality issues as identified by Wellington et al (2005).	Complete cost versus benefit ratio analysis.
Child Protection issues	Undertake refresher child protection training. Complete occupational risk assessment.
Author distracted by new literature, theories and methodologies.	Decide on scope, clarify focus and stick to it. Consider appropriate methodology and understand the implications of its use, eg in practical and ethical terms.
Author's personal and professional circumstances.	Personal and professional considerations to be discussed with university supervisor, LA line manager and partner as appropriate.

Appendix 4 – Transcripts referenced

INTERVIEW NUMBER 1

018	P1	Dunno – just did it. No-one came to talk about it. When I got in they just said the
019		statement's here today and it just followed me around 24/7.
147	P1	Mum's views are that it's handy getting help and seeing it from her point of view she thinks
148		it's great but it's not them that has to sit through it or do it. My brother hated being SEN,
149		almost everyone does. Sitting there all that time and the SSA could have done with
150		chilling out a bit.
151	INT	What advice would you give to another pupil going through the statutory assessment
152		process?
153	P1	Do a runner. Don't go through with it or go through it for almost a year, SSA following you
154		around 24/7. Say/try and talk yourself out of it. Say you'll do Successmaker and try and
155		improve your spellings on computers. I'm good on computers. Worst bit is having to
156		talk/listen to the SSA.
171	P1	Yes/no because it didn't make me work things out myself. They did things for me. They
172		wanted me to work them out but thought it would be quicker if I didn't.
174	P1	What happened, it didn't happen as nothing really changed. I improved on spelling, but it's
175		still bad.
177	P1	Great! it will get the SSA off my back.
183	P1	Won't ever be a way to make it easier, having to learn and to work.
195	P1	When I stopped taking pills it all stopped. People stopped talking about Successmaker.
196		People don't know what it is like for dumb kids, but not those who just had spelling
197		difficulties but those who were slow.
198	INT	You had a diagnosis of ADHD?
199	P1	What's that ?
200	INT	<i>(Explained what ADHD stood for)</i>
201	P1	I didn't know I had that. I know I have a disability and I know I got hyper. I was told I'd got
202		to take pills to improve my behaviour. The doctor prescribed them in Y3 and I stopped Jan
203		2004. I still have my asthma spray.
205	P1	My mates, when I had one SSA, thought she was fit. She's still there helping others. They
206		did make fun when some SSAs were with me. One we called 'stinky'! I also had a Muslim
207		SSA who could have a laugh, knew when I was tired and not feeling so good.
212	P1	People who help other people who have problems, though having SEN is boring. You're
213		stuck with one woman on your own filling out sheets for ages, it shouldn't be allowed.
214		Sometimes I was with X and X, they are both slow and different to me. They did the same
215		work and I thought I was smarter. X had learning problems and different types of problems
216		and gets called for that. I don't like to say what he gets called, it's tight, and he has
217		accidents in his pants. He is slow and can't speak properly. If you try and speak to him, he
218		has too much saliva in his mouth, he talks gibberish. Others will swear at him and some
219		stab him with a pencil sometimes. He sits there and takes it. I think he should tell
220		someone. Teachers are strict with teaching but don't take bullying seriously. People were
221		alright with me. I'm sorted 'cos I've got mates. We need security guards at school. Some
222		teachers have been hit by students. I once flipped at a teacher because she accused me
223		of throwing something and I swore at her. I was removed from the classroom and put in
224		the SEN room.
225	INT	What are the stories surrounding a child or young person who has SEN?
226	P1	Oh, just having it, like, having a woman working with you, wanting me to concentrate.
227		People think you've a disability and I know have the disability in spelling. Think SEN kids
228		different, not normal, and can make fun of them. Embarrassing, weird.
229	INT	How would you know if someone has a statement of SEN? What are the symbols?
230	P1	What they do and look like. Not as fit as some people and you can tell with the people
231		they hang round with or if they are on their own. Being followed round by the SSA. Being
232		withdrawn and they come and get you if you don't go. Have special folders you can see
233		through. Minders! It's like they're attached to you at the hip.
234	INT	Who do you think has the power in school?
235	P1	I didn't have any power ... dunno. Took me out of lessons they thought would be best –
236		like English. I liked English but not Maths and would rather have gone to SEN room rather

237 than Maths to talk about something different. Weren't asked questions about which
238 lessons I would've liked to have been taken out of.

240 P1 Someone gave me help and I was grateful for this but know that I couldn't turn round and
241 say I didn't like it or want it. I understand that they had put time and effort into working with
242 me. Anyway most gave me answers.
243 One didn't know anything and we knew more than him. He got things wrong in Maths,
244 didn't know equations. He came to help with Maths but just couldn't do it.
245 We were given these sheets but SSAs didn't tell or explain big words and they took over
246 and did it for us. The SSA once did a full sheet for me while I sat there talking to my
247 mates. SSA had little pads to write on and used to throw a benny when someone picked it
248 up.

249 INT What about your mum?

250 P1 Mum asked to change lessons for me but nothing happened but she comes into school
251 and tells them and everything. Mum has power over the teacher and tells her things that
252 might help me.

253 INT Is there, like, a power chain do you think?

254 P1 Me → SSA → Teacher → SENCo → Mum → EP. This is how I think the power goes with
255 me at the bottom.

256 INT Why the EP at the top?

257 P1 Because you've got the power to stop the statement. You listened to me and my mum.

266 INT What about the organisation of SEN?

267 P1 Room small, gets hot, uncomfortable, nothing to read on walls. SEN like a punishment
268 really. Most of the SSAs make people have memory loss and I couldn't remember most of
269 lessons when they had finished because they did it.
270 I think had about five SEN people who came in and helped and some more as well - three
271 in same class as me for Maths once. Someone's timetable messed up and two staff came
272 and taught me together.

281 P1 They have power over me by threat of revealing what was talked about like copying DVDs
282 at car boot sales - police could end up coming round and I could get jumped. Where does
283 confidential information go?

284 INT It would go in your files depending on who was involved. For example a number of
285 professionals have been involved with you over a long period of time and they will all have
286 their own file on you.

287 P1 So everyone that has seen me in the past will have their own file? Do the SSAs see my
288 file?

289 INT Yes, that's right and a lot of these reports from the other professionals will be in the
290 school's SEN file.

291 P1 Am I allowed to see these? Do you have one on me?

293 INT Were there any routines or rituals connected to your SEN?

294 P1 Had to go to Successmaker. SEN teacher timetable of when teachers were coming in
295 can't be changed. It's just that it encourages bad behaviour 'cos normally you'd get bored
296 doing something and then would do something wrong, get told off and be bored again. Not
297 easy to change the timetable – teachers put days in to suit them, not you. Teachers think
298 they are more important when it is us that needs the help, not them, it's like collecting
299 money for charity and then keeping it yourself.

300 INT You have told me about what is happening now, but in an ideal world what would you like
301 to see happen to a young person with a statement?

302 P1 We could develop sporting activities for SEN pupils. If they get involved in things like
303 football, and they are good at it, they may not get picked on as much.

304 INT We need to restyle the whole system?

305 P1 We could ask the kids who are having SEN today or those who have left school now and
306 don't bother about it no more and you could ask kids going to college.
307 Most people who succeeded in school tend not to have good jobs. Kids with a disability
308 can still achieve higher. Smarter people aim higher.

309 INT Anything else?

310 P1 If I was in own clothes I could act different as a school uniform makes SEN kids look
311 worse. If you're in your own clothes, you can make an effort to look good and to be
312 smarter. Uniform can make SEN kids look worse.

313	INT	What about the timetable?
314	P1	We could reduce stress as there are certain days where there are too many 'hard' lessons
315		it needs to be balanced and then at end of the afternoon break to go in a small room with
316		SEN teacher and halfway through the day have a lesson you choose to attend, that could
317		reduce the stress you have and improve attendance. For Science and Maths there are too
318		many lessons in a week. Science is every day except for one. We need more school
319		trips. Pupils have stressed the teachers out and they have run away in tears. Also if my
320		work is not finished I have had to complete it at home as well as do homework. This
321		makes you more stressed before you go into the next lesson. Shouldn't be for an hour
322		either – felt that I'm going to die in an hour. Lessons should be fifteen minutes to half an hour, no longer.
324	P1	We need to improve attendance.
325		We need the opportunity to say 'I don't want it and I will do it on my own'. We need to be
326		given the opportunity to say yes or no and to be given something to tick. We should be
327		asked whether the SSA or the SpLD teacher is making a difference.
331	P1	You can come out of lessons and go on Successmaker on the computer which takes ten
332		minutes to finish. It can be fun with a chart to complete and a high score gets a prize and
333		everyone competes for it.
334		There should be a clearer way of seeing who does what and what the SENCo does. Who
335		does she report to?
336		You need to know who will be involved and when and for how long. You also need
337		opportunities to be honest about the school and the support from SSA, although you don't
338		want to hurt people's feelings.
339		Sometimes, if you're getting bullied at school, telling teachers could make it worse. It
340		would be helpful if there was a room (like in a church confessional) to talk and ask for
341		help, ask what could be done. You could talk to a priest who wouldn't grass on you. Might
342		sound corny, it doesn't need a priest exactly but someone to talk to when you need to.
343		I think people in school today probably have more problems than me.
344		We need different Successmaker activities to include sport and music and anything that
345		the kids like. Successmaker could be used in a normal lesson to make it more fun for the
346		students and they would take it in more as they were doing something they like.
347		Relax on tests as they get harder every year. We could have chill out time in a room
348		where you could go to listen to music or even have a snooker table in there. Have it as a
349		reward to go in there. Have a ticket or certificate for 100% achievement/attendance over
350		four weeks and to be able to take a mate with you.
351		I have been a Senior Prefect and Sports Captain all through school and wouldn't want to
352		be a SEN mentor.
353		I think smarter kids in school could point them in a better direction. They would
354		understand what a statement is and would ask them their views.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 2

005	INT	Did your parents and teachers mention anything about statutory assessment, can you
006		remember?
007	P2	Yes they did. They tried to talk me through everything that would be happening and that
008		how I would have a special teacher to help me with everything and they explained I would
009		probably have one for the rest of my school life. When I was in year 1 they thought it
010		would be for the rest of my school life.
018	INT	So how do they ask you about your views?
019	P2	When I go through my things, well when my mum's there, it kind of feels like I'm drifted
020		out 'cos they normally talk to my mum and I just kind of sit there - they won't speak to me
021		- they just speak to my mum so it feels like sometimes I have no point of view but if
022		my mum's not there then they will just speak to me which feels better because I'm getting
023		my point of view across otherwise I won't get the opportunity to get it across.
024	INT	At what point do you think you have the opportunity?
025	P2	Last year before my statement ceased and when my mum couldn't turn up they were
026		asking me all the questions so it felt better to actually be able to give them what I thought
027		instead of my mum saying what she thought.

028 INT Have you actually seen your statement?
029 P2 Yes, Mr X used to go through it. Every time I got a new statement, he would go through it
030 with me, my statement, and all the targets that I had been set from the first statement.
031 INT How helpful was the statement?
032 P2 It gave me more confidence, I felt I could do more things and he gave me a lesson where
033 I knew that I would enjoy going to and he did help me a lot with a lot of things even though
034 in high school I went to three different teachers so it kind of felt you got to know one
035 teacher and then they would leave, so it was helpful. I would just have preferred to have
036 one teacher and then get to know the teacher and trust them, so then it would have
037 been better for me.

049 INT Do you remember what you said?
050 P2 It was just general things like I wanted the work to change, because it felt like the work I
051 was doing was for kids a lot of years younger than me so it made me feel quite dumb.
052 INT It was younger work that made you feel dumb?
053 P2 It used to annoy me like checking my spellings and it would be three letter words so it
054 would be really irritating because I was always saying to myself I can do better than this, I
055 know I can, but why's no-one giving me opportunities? I felt quite powerless about this.
056 INT You actually said that?

061 INT So, in your school, what do you think your friends and teachers and other children and
062 pupils think about people with statements?
063 P2 Well, my friends are alright because some of my other friends have got statements and
064 then I've also got some friends who are deaf, so they've also got a statement, so they're
065 OK with it and then, like my other friends, they've just grown to it and they're used to it
066 now. They just think it's part of me but other people can be quite nasty about it. I can
067 remember one time I went into food tech and I was just doing my work and X said some-
068 thing to me and he kept saying to me 'you've spelt it wrong, you've spelt it wrong', and
069 making me feel really dumb about it, and I just got annoyed and walked out of the class-
070 room so it's the kind of things people say to you and it kind of knocks me because my
071 confidence goes up and down really easily.

095 INT Do you think having a statement actually encouraged or discouraged your progress in
096 school?
097 P2 Well in some points it encouraged my progress with me. I went up a lot even though some
098 things are still quite low like my reading level, but in other ways because my confidence
099 was going up and down so much it also discouraged me, so it was a bit of both.
100 INT If you could rewrite it, even though you can't remember that far back, if you could rewrite
101 it, what might you say in it?
102 P2 I would probably include a lot more of my views because I hate feeling ignored. It just
103 makes me feel I haven't got a say in what they're doing.
104 INT How helpful, or unhelpful, is the type or level of support provided by your statement? Do
105 you have any special support assistant needs in class?
106 P2 I had no help in the classroom unless I asked for the help but sometimes, depending on
107 which year I was in, sometimes I would have a lesson twice a week, but in year 10 it went
108 down to one time a week which it didn't really bother me - it just felt like even though it
109 had gone down I was still doing the work I really did feel like I could do years ago so, even
110 though I was saying to him 'can I have harder work set' he would just say he had no say
111 in it, so he can't change it.
112 INT What are your parents' and brother's or sister's views on it?
113 P2 I get quite jealous of my sister because my sister, she seems like she's had none of the
114 problems in school, but it doesn't really bother her. I think she gets a bit annoyed
115 sometimes when I'm asking her how to spell things when I'm doing coursework, but other
116 than that I don't think it really bothers her because she does see it as a part of being me
117 and I'm still going to be annoying without it anyway.

120 INT What advice would you give to other pupils going through the statutory assessment or
121 getting a statement?
122 P2 That it's not as scary as it is when you actually start, and that it will help you. It might not
123 feel it's going to help you, but it will help you a lot and it will give you a lot more
124 confidence, even though you don't feel like you're going to learn for no reason, it will help
125 you a lot.

131 P2 No, I was just put on a timetable whenever he could get me in because there were so
132 many other people needing SpLD lessons. They just put me into the time that they
133 thought was best even though it does mean you're coming out of a lesson that's really
134 important that you're there. They didn't look at what your learning needs were or what
135 lesson you're in, they just look at what time they can get you in to have their lesson.

156 INT What opportunities were you given to talk about your statement?
157 P2 I got my annual review come through and because it had been moved because I went on
158 holiday after Easter, and my mum couldn't turn up, so it was just me and Miss X and Mr Y
159 in the room and Miss X was saying to me how she thinks I don't need a statement no
160 more and how it would be ceased if the government agrees with it, and if I agree with it,
161 and we was just talking through everything that's been done and I asked why over the
162 years I'd been ignored so many times and she said, 'well it's not that we're ignoring you,
163 we set you targets and you really don't have a point of view in that because your targets
164 are set by people that look at the amount of work you do and how well you do it and then
165 we set your targets out of that' which really did quite annoy me because I wanted a say in
166 it which it felt like no matter what I did they was ignoring me.
167
168 INT How did you feel when they said they were going to cease your statement?
169 P2 Well I was quite proud of myself when he said the statement was going to cease because
170 I knew I'd got that way, and I had had help, but I had done it all by myself and my confi-
171 dence had gone up so much so I was pleased with it but I was a bit like, it felt weird not
172 having SpLD lessons no more. I was so used to having these lessons - it was a big
173 change getting myself used to not having to go there no more.

188 INT What did you do differently when you had a statement to what you do now?
189 P2 Well, when I had the statement I kind of like, I know I had the lessons but even when I
190 was out of the lessons I kind of knew that I had to do everything quite perfectly because I
191 knew that the teachers would be monitoring it because I had been told by one of the
192 teachers that all my work has to be gone through so when my statement goes through so
193 they can set me targets so I felt, like, I had to do everything perfectly otherwise they would
194 mark down 'that lesson I couldn't be bothered' or 'that lesson I wasn't listening to the
195 teacher as much as I should have been'.
196 INT It actually put you under a bit more pressure, to be listening doing everything or ...
197 P2 Yes.
198 INT OK. Have you any suggestions for improving the assessment process and making sure
199 that young people have a say in it?
200 P2 I would like the statement to change so we do actually have a say on our own targets and
201 what we say when we have our review is actually listened to and I would also like it when
202 the parents are there for them to still talk to you instead of acting as if you're not there. It
203 does feel like you're invisible and I would also like sometimes, depending on how bad
204 your dyslexia is, for the targets to be made a little bit harder because it does feel like the
205 targets are sometimes made so easy for you that you know you're going to be able to
206 achieve them and go so much further but no-one's paying attention when you get past
207 that target.
208 INT So how did you describe yourself to others when you had a statement?
209 P2 Well if anyone would ask me about it then I would tell them exactly what dyslexia was
210 because normally whenever someone asked me about it they don't actually know what it
211 is, so it's just talking through them with it, and then they would ask me things like 'does
212 it not annoy you going into the lessons and everything' and I would kind of explain that I
213 like going to lessons but sometimes I would like it to change and everything, so it was
214 kind of like my way of getting my point of view across even though it wasn't to someone
215 that was, like, a staff member so it was, to me, even if someone was asking me, I like to
216 think it was my way of getting my point of view across.
217 INT So you described yourself to others that you had a statement and that you had dyslexia
218 and you would go through what that meant?
219 P2 Yes.
220 INT How do you think your parents or teachers described you?
221 P2 Well my mum always said that it was a little part of me and it just makes me a bit more
222 unique so there's nothing wrong with it, and my teachers, I'm not sure what they would
223 say. Some of them might say that even if he/she didn't have it he/she would still be there

224		because she wouldn't shut up in the lesson so it wouldn't really make a change, others
225		might say, like, if I didn't have it, it would probably make my sets change because I would
226		be in higher sets. Because I was talking to my English teacher about it and she said 'well
227		if you didn't have dyslexia when I look at your coursework you're not meant to be in this
228		set but, because you're dyslexic, you've been put into this set so if you need the help you
229		may get the help' so it does feel like I'm being put into a set that I don't need to be put into
230		just because I've got it, which makes me feel I'm being singled out, which I would just
231		have preferred to be put into the set I was meant to be in .
234	INT	Is there anything else we can help other young people with?
235	P2	Well, I would say you go to the lessons and when you first start off it feels really strange
236		'cos you do feel, you kind of question yourself why you're different to someone else, so I
237		would like it explained to you, like, that other people haven't got it but it doesn't make you
238		really different, it just means you are a little bit different, and even though you may feel a
239		bit upset that you've got it, you can't change it but you can get help to improve it, so
240		there's no point beating yourself up about it. I've had times when I've just kind of sat there
241		for hours thinking to myself, like, why have I always had the problems in the family be-
242		cause I had hearing problem when I was young which meant I had to go into an operation
243		to get grommets in my ears and then I had this, which made me feel why was I the one
244		who had to be different than my sister?
245		So I would like it to change so people don't feel that, well, to compare them to other
246		people, because it kind of upsets you, comparing yourself to somebody else when they
247		haven't got it, it just knocks yourself really down.
248	INT	I want to show you something, this is called a cultural web and it has six circles.
249		This is all about looking at things that are happening now - so we're looking at stories –
250		what are the stories about young people who have a statement of SEN?
251	P2	I think unless you know someone who is dyslexic then some people kind of put you in this
252		category of being really dumb because they don't understand like what it is and
253		everything, or they might understand what it is but they still do it, and I don't think they are
254		trying to be nasty but I just feel that's the general category some people put you in
255		because they don't understand what it's like and they've not been through it.
309	INT	Who had the power?
310	P2	Miss X, because I'm a bit scared of talking to Miss X because if you get her in a bad
311		mood then she will be in a bad mood for the rest of the year with you, so she had all the
312		opportunities to change it but, and she knew how a lot of people feel, besides I spoke to
313		one of my mates and she felt exactly the same about it. She said to me that because she
314		had a review this morning, and she said, 'Well I just kind of sat there and my mum did all
315		the talking for me so it's just as if you're not there, but they just don't want to
316		acknowledge that you're actually there.'
330	P2	Well you would be given work, the teacher would write it in this book, but the worst thing
331		is I'm not allowed to see what she wrote in this book so it kind of feels they could be
332		writing anything about you and you're not allowed to see it; because I asked to see it one
333		time and I got told I'm not allowed to see it which really confused me because it's about
334		me, so why can't I see it, because, well, why not?
367	INT	What other rituals are there, what do you have to do? You know, where you might say'
368		I've got to go and do this', talk me through the sorts of things you had to do.
369	P2	Going into lessons we had certain things to do, even if the work was easy, they had to
370		help you even if they knew you could do it. If you were late because you could have
371		worse things to do, you had to be on time as the SENCo would have a go. I got told off
372		because I was talking to a teacher and the SENCo got stressed out about this and
373		threatened taking away the lesson because I had abused it. I hadn't abused it. I had
374		been talking to a teacher and it was really important to me. I would have liked the SENCo
375		not to have jumped down my throat when I was late. I was genuinely not late, things had
376		just happened. Others used Successmaker and used to get upset because work set was
377		too easy, eg 2+2 - was that a ritual?
392	INT	What about organisation?
393	P2	To pick lessons to come out of – I would not have picked a GCSE lesson to come out of
394		as I didn't want to miss anything – you get behind when you have to do this and it is hard
395		to catch up.

408 INT How have you enjoyed the session?
409 P2 It has been a good way of getting my point across.
410 INT On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being you have not enjoyed the session at all and 10 that you
411 have really enjoyed it where would you put yourself?
412 P2 I would say 9 out of 10.
413 INT What would have made it 10?
414 P2 Probably when I originally found out about it I was really scared and didn't know what
415 was happening. Probably because I didn't speak to you when you first rang up and
416 perhaps I should have done.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 3

067 INT Ok, so how did having a statement encourage or discourage your progress in school?
068 P3 Well, I don't think it made any difference 'cos I'm going to go into further education even
069 though I didn't do well in my exams. I don't regret having a statement but I don't know
070 what good it did, I'll not going into further education with my work and stuff but because I
071 want to go to college. Only I'm going through an application at the moment. Did mum
072 mention that? I think I'll probably be alright.

086 INT OK, can you tell me any symbols that represent a pupil with a statement.
087 P3 Not really, although those SSAs were usually with them that needed help but they got
088 called, loads of kids swore at them, no-one wanted someone sitting next to them. I didn't
089 as well.

092 INT Mrs X, was she powerful?
093 P3 She got quite a lot of power, loads of staff and she helped you when you wanted it
094 although I had been given detention by the SENCo for slouching and couldn't be bothered
095 and I told her.

109 INT This links into the next circle, controls, what do you think are controls in the school? The
110 teachers coming to pick you up to take you to lessons?
111 P3 Dunno, can't think, although teachers have control over the SSAs. One SSA once told me
112 off for talking to the teacher.

123 P3 I'd mention not wanting to do any work then because we copied straight out of a text book
124 instead of just photocopying it and made us do something else.
125 INT Give examples?
126 P3 I don't know - do something that they enjoy. School is so boring, we need choices. Make it
127 so it's enjoyable for them to do that.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 4

026 INT If the question was 'if you could rewrite your statement' what would you write?
027 P4 Well I don't know if I have read my statement or not, and that, but I was given a sheet of
028 paper, and that, with stuff I had to improve on, and that.

036 INT What do teachers think?
037 P4 I just think they, like, think teachers - well I remember, I don't know whether it was last
038 year or the year before, a teacher said to me 'oh you've got really neat handwriting
039 considering', so I was like alright...
040 INT How did that make you feel?
041 P4 I was a bit, like, I don't see why that should have anything to do with my writing but...
042 INT Have you had any other comments like that?
043 P4 When in my technology lessons, I don't know whether it's to do with it or not, but I have
044 targets I have to do, and this year it was, and I don't even like, ask for help because I
045 don't need to. I'm not that good at spelling and stuff but I don't go 'oh, I can't spell', but
046 my teacher said 'if you ever need any spelling, just ask, and I will spell it out for you', but
047 I don't need that. I just write how I think it is and she says I can use dictionaries and
048 I'm thinking 'you don't need to say it in front of the whole class!' She's probably thinking
049 that I was stupid, probably because they're not teaching stuff like that - they probably just
050 thinking 'oh, he can't spell and he can't do the work.'

056 INT How did having a statement encourage or discourage your progress in school?

057 P4 It never really changed my work and stuff because I always tried my best in English and
058 stuff. It doesn't really bother me having it (*dyslexia*) wasn't an issue for me because I
059 know I could do the work just not as well as others but it doesn't really bother me having
060 it. Well I used to have to like go to the head master and stuff. It didn't really bother me that
061 much, some people it probably bothered.

062 INT How helpful or unhelpful was the statement and support?
063 P4 Yes, it was quite good. I like learning a lot of stuff and we always used to do group work
064 and stuff. It did help me quite a lot in my English and stuff with like punctuation and
065 spellings because I did get better. But then we did the Maths. It didn't really help 'cos it
066 just used to be going over stuff that was really easy and I understood - like counting back
067 from like 10 backwards and I used to do that and then while she got taught it I just had to
068 sit there knowing how to do it. I never did because I didn't want to go, 'oh, I don't want to
069 do this because I can do it and the other person going 'well it's not my fault I can't do it'.

073 INT From what you know, what advice would you give to another pupil going through the
074 statutory assessment process?
075 P4 Like don't think just because you've got a statement, or whatever, that you can't do stuff
076 because you can just get better. But after that you just have to like think or you may as
077 well give up 'cos if you just try your best and stuff you can get better and you don't
078 need it anymore.

079 INT What discussions have you had with the school about the level of support that you
080 needed?
081 P4 When I used to get took out of maths and stuff my teacher just used to say you shouldn't
082 be took out of maths. If it's for English they say you need to have these lessons so I just
083 went 'tough'. They just told me like saying you have to come to these.

093 INT What opportunities were they to discuss your provision?
094 P4 Meetings? There used to be, when I used to go in high school I used to get I don't know
095 whether it was like two meetings where someone would like speak to me. Then there
096 was one just last year I think it was, near the end and my mum came into that one as well
097 but just before that I had another thing that I had to do like tests and stuff with a man but
098 just before like the end of last year. They might have sent a letter home or something like
099 that, I can't remember. I was quite happy because I don't have to go that lesson again. I
100 mean like last year, I still had a statement but I didn't go to the lessons. Miss X said that
101 she was still going to like watch me, and stuff, see how it was going but I didn't need to go
102 to them. I felt glad about that because I thought, oh well I've overcome some of the
103 difficulties I'd had with English and stuff.

134 INT Are you more familiar with the term dyslexia than specific learning difficulties?
135 P4 Don't know what it means anyway. They think they know what they're talking about but
136 they don't really because they don't have a clue what it means anyway.
137 INT But you put people right?
138 P4 Yes.
139 INT I can imagine.

153 INT What are the symbols surrounding a pupil with special needs?
154 P4 In Primary you used to get like this big plastic thing and it was like red and it was
155 something you write on and it was slanted like up so you could write like if you couldn't
156 even write properly or something and it was supposed to help you write but it didn't even
157 make any difference. I never used it. I think all they get more help than others because it's
158 not fair and stuff like that because they're getting all the help because they have got that
159 wrong with them and they don't understand but people probably think you should be in
160 lower sets like in English and maths but you don't really have to be.

215 INT Thinking about the ideal cultural web – what could we say about the stories, symbols,
216 power...?
217 P4 Like a better classroom, a nicer classroom, more in, and put displays up and stuff.
218 A special form had to be sent to college and some teachers didn't know the statement
219 was ceased - wouldn't want teachers to think still on statement. An ideal story would be
220 that teachers won't question or challenge work done – don't want to go to college to be
221 given help that I don't need. Teachers will know when you no longer need support.
222 Old story – quite often teachers accuse you of cheating. Would like to change

223		assumptions – teachers sometimes think that pupils have cheated – have had parents
224		helping them when they bring in work from home (<i>described situation of X - computer</i>).
232	INT	What would your ideal routine be?
233	P4	The lessons should begin with like a starter then the main work and you should have
234		something good to end it with like a little game or something.
235	INT	A bit like a party – a starter, main meal and then a pudding? Lessons should be geared
236		towards that?
258	INT	On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being this session is terrible and 10 being that it is brilliant, what
259		would you give it?
260	P4	9 - I wanted to answer some more questions. Yes - some things I didn't understand. Do
261		you know when you are explaining stuff, well I didn't know how to explain stuff – just like
262		when I had to explain something I didn't know how to explain it – it's just not remembering
263		as much.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 5

001	INT	Right, I'm just going to ask you now a few questions and I'd like you to be as honest as
002		you can be. It doesn't matter if they are difficult just tell me what you can remember and
003		try and be as honest as you can as well, ok. If you feel uncomfortable at any time just say
004		so and I will stop the tape.
005		First of all who first told you, you may have special needs?
006	P5	I didn't really know that they were special needs.
013	INT	Year three you think. OK.
014		Now what did your parents or teachers say to you about asking for - it's called a
015		statutory assessment, can you remember that term?
016	P5	No I didn't hear that term, but I remember my mum saying I needed help in class.
023	INT	So when you got your statement, which has been ceased, that's why it's been such a
024		celebration of progress, so, well done. But can you tell me what you know about your
025		statement?
026	P5	From what I can remember there were targets I had to achieve.
027	INT	Can you remember how you felt when you knew you had a statement?
028	P5	Well I didn't really know I had a statement at the time; all I know is that I couldn't keep up
029		with the other children and needed extra help. This made me feel that I was not thick, but
030		there was something different about me.
031	INT	So you had you're statement and at the end of each year it should have been reviewed
032		it's called annual review meeting. Can you remember about that? Can you tell me about
033		that?
034	P5	I can remember my Mum going into school for meetings. I don't remember much else.
044	INT	As you got older, obviously at high school, was that the same?
045	P5	Because I was older I was more aware about the work and may be I would have liked to
046		have given input.
047	INT	So tell me about the support you had as you had a statement for specific learning
048		difficulties or dyslexia so what kind of support did you have with that ?
049	P5	I didn't specifically have any support , but SSAs were in the class and they helped me,
050		but sometimes they didn't know what they were doing.
051		I did have a teacher twice a week in groups of three and we were all doing the same work
052		and sometimes it didn't seem fair because I could do some of the work and I didn't feel it
053		was challenging enough.
066	INT	So what were your brother's, sister's, parents' views about you having a statement about
067		your special needs?
068	P5	Well I had found out now I'm older that my Mum had to really fight to get my statement
069		and she wasn't very pleased when she knew that my statement was to cease, but
070		because I'm quite happy about it, I can just carry on like all the other children she's quite
071		alright about it now.
076	INT	What advice would you give other pupils going through the statutory assessment
		process?
079	P5	To be as honest as you can about what your needs are.

097	INT	Sometimes when you have a statement, it feels seems like you have a label, did you ever
098		feel like that?
099	P5	Yes, I felt different because I was taken out of class and people knew.
126	INT	If you can think of anything we have missed out as we go along, tell me and I can fill up
127		the circles. What are the symbols of having a statement of special needs or special
128		needs? This can be concrete visual symbols. Say, for example, you were walking down
129		the corridor, what would make people think you were different, what would make you
130		stand out?
131	P5	No-one would look at me and think I was different, but they would know I was different
132		when I was withdrawn from class or when I need special help.
139	INT	Now, this is about organisation, this covers a wide range of things from organisation of the
140		school, organising the special needs department, organisation of special needs
141		resources. What do you think about the organisation of your school?
142	P5	It was alright really, but sometimes you would go to classes and teachers would be late
143		and I don't think that was really good organisation.
176	INT	Right, last question then, well actually next to the last question. What do you do differently
177		now that you have not got a statement as to when you had a statement?
178	P5	I am more confident, but I think that is because I feel better about myself because I am
179		not taken out of classes. I no longer feel embarrassed or ashamed.
180	INT	Ahh! I am going to ask you a question on a scale of 1 to 10. So on a scale of 1 to 10, 1
181		being not so good and 10 brill, how comfortable were you, what did you feel about your
182		session today?
183	P5	9
184	INT	9, why not 10? Only joking. What would have made it 10?
185	P5	I don't know really because I have not minded doing this.
192	INT	... in an ideal world what would the stories be surrounding a child with a
193		statement?
194	P5	Well, you shouldn't have to feel ashamed because you can't do things like the other kids
195		can.
198	INT	Alright, now what about symbols, but they would need to be like positive symbols because
199		this is the ideal world isn't it?
200	P5	Well there should be no more special needs classrooms.
203	INT	OK, what about power?
204	P5	I think we should have a bit more power, well like timetable changes and things like that.
205	INT	Right we are working our way round to organisations.
206	P5	Well, we should be able to choose what support we have, like mentors we have in school.
207		I would prefer them to help me in class because the SpLD teacher she gives me work
208		to do and then she just sits back and waits for me to do it. Just watches me.
209	INT	What about controls?
210	P5	Well, I think the teachers could treat us more like adults and ask for our opinions more.

INTERVIEW NUMBER 6

192	INT	On a scale on 1 to10, 1 being absolutely awful and 10 being brilliant, how would you rate
193		the session.
194	P6	Five
195	INT	What would make it six?
196	P6	I don't know, some chocolate? You could have brought some chocolate.
197	INT	Chocolate, what are you like? It's just that when doing research we're not allowed to offer
198		incentives in case we're seen as bribing you to take part. OK. The last thing then, is there
199		anything else you want to add, I know you mentioned something earlier before we
200		started...

Appendix 5 – Pilot study interview questionnaire

1	Who first told you that you may have SEN?
2	What did your parents/teachers say to you about asking for a statutory assessment which might lead to a statement?
3	What did they do to prepare you for the statutory assessment process?
4	What did they do to keep you informed/ involved in the statutory assessment?
5	How did they ask you for your views - on the pupil view form?
6	When the proposed/final statement was written – how did you contribute to it?
7	How helpful was the Statement of SEN? (Helpful, accurate and easily understandable information on your special educational needs?)
8	How helpful were the advice and information leaflets sent out by the LEA in relation to the statutory assessment procedure? (Accessible and clear?)
9	Did you agree with the final statement and reports describing your needs? Could you have done anything about it if you didn't?
10	In your school what do your friends/teachers/other children think about pupils with statements?
11	What were your feelings when the statement was given?
12	Has there been any conflict of interests between advice from your teachers/parents?
13	How did having a statement encourage/discourage your progress in school?
14	If you could rewrite your statement – what would you write?
15	How helpful/unhelpful was the type/level of support provided by the statement (SSA/SpLD teacher)?
16	What are your parents'/brothers'/sisters' views on your SEN/statement – do they comment?
17	What advice would you give to another pupil going through the statutory assessment process?
18	What discussion did you have with school staff/your parents about what/when/the level of support needed?
19	How were your targets/provision/achievements identified?
20	What opportunities have there been to discuss your statement (or possibly cease) and the provision (especially if you had experienced any difficulties) with school staff?

21	What opportunities have there been to discuss the statutory assessment process and the statement with other statemented pupils?
22	How did having a statement benefit/not benefit you in school/support your learning?
23	What did you do differently when you had a statement to what you do now?
24	What were your feelings when the statement was ceased?
25	Have you any suggestions for improving the statutory assessment process/making sure that young people have a say in the process?
26	How did you describe yourself to others when you had a statement?
27	How do your parents/carers/teachers/others describe you?
28	What are your personal feelings about these labels?
29	Are you aware of other labels used?

Appendix 6 – Final interview questionnaire

1	Who first told you that you may have SEN?
2	How were you prepared/informed/involved in the statutory assessment process?
3	When the proposed/final statement was written – how did you contribute to it?
4	How helpful was the Statement of SEN? (Helpful, accurate and easily understandable information on your special educational needs?)
5	Did you agree with the final statement and reports describing your needs? Could you have done anything about it if you didn't?
6	In your school what do your friends/teachers/other children think about pupils with statements?
7	What were your feelings when the statement was given?
8	How did having a statement encourage/discourage your progress in school/benefit you in school –support your learning?
9	If you could rewrite your statement – what would you write?
10	How helpful/unhelpful was the type/level of support provided by the statement (SSA/SpLD teacher)?
11	What are your parents'/brothers'/sisters' views on your SEN/statement – do they comment?
12	What advice would you give to another pupil going through the statutory assessment process?
13	What discussion did you have with school staff/your parents about what/when/the level of support needed?
14	How were your targets/provision/achievements identified?
15	What opportunities have there been to discuss your statement (or possibly cease) and the provision (especially if you had experienced any difficulties) with school staff?
16	What did you do differently when you had a statement to what you do now?
17	What were your feelings when the statement was ceased?
18	Have you any suggestions for improving the statutory assessment process/making sure that young people have a say in the process?
19	How did you describe yourself to others when you had a statement?
20	How do your parents/carers/teachers/others describe you?
21	What are your personal feelings about these labels?

The Cultural Web

1	What are the stories around having a statement of SEN?
2	What are the symbols around having a statement of SEN?
3	Who has the power in the SEN culture?
4	Describe the organisation within the SEN culture in school?
5	What are the controls surrounding the whole aspect of the SEN culture?
6	What are the rituals & routines linked to SEN? – the way things are done around here (in school)?

On a rating scale of 1-10, what are your feelings about the session?

Appendix 7 - Draft guidance for schools compiled by the author (adapted from Pomerantz and Pomerantz, 2002, and Gersch, 1996)

GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Introduction to Statutory Assessment

Senior Managers:

1	Does the school have a policy to ensure that the pupil is made aware of their special educational needs (SEN) and directly involved in any decisions about their needs?
2	Does the school have a pupil introduction/guide (appropriate to their age) to the Code of Practice graduated levels of response?
3	Are there mechanisms in place for pupils with SEN to regularly feedback to the management team on the support provided (on all levels of the graduated response but particularly where a pupil is in receipt of a statement) and skills of the staff involved in supporting them?
4	What opportunities are there for staff to develop their skills in discussing the statutory assessment process (both in terms of knowledge of criteria, levels of support available, the timeframe and legal requirements) with pupils identified as having SEN and whom the school feel require a statement of SEN?
5	What staff training for teaching pupils with SEN has been carried out?
6	How does the school analyse the learning environment to promote opportunities for pupils with SEN, eg curriculum content, delivery of the curriculum including language used by teaching and support staff?
7	Do school policies for teaching and learning reflect the needs of pupils with SEN?
8	How effectively is differentiation carried out?
9	Are there opportunities for consultation/SEN pupil participation in forums such as focus groups, etc in order for constructive feedback (including concerns) to be provided?
10	Are there internal communication and self-review mechanisms of SEN (effectiveness of support, monitoring of progress) to anticipate demands and problems before they occur within the SEN system in place?
11	Is there a proportionate representation of SEN pupils in pupil groups, eg school council?

SENCos:

1	<p>Where you are considering asking a professional to assess a pupil (using an educational psychologist {EP} as an example) are there mechanisms in place for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the pupil to have a choice in the matter (to be able to refuse); • the involvement of the pupil in the consultation process, feedback, recommendations, plans and/or reporting information to others; • making information available to the pupil about professionals' involvement before any meetings take place; • the pupil to have access to SEN/Education Psychology Service information (leaflets/ resource packs) describing the work of an EP; • checking that the pupil is clear about all this information; • the pupil to meet the EP prior to the assessment to discuss optimal learning situations, etc; • the pupil to discuss the possible implications of the findings from the EP assessment, eg that they may meet the criteria for a statutory assessment; • providing an example copy of an anonymous EP report and talking it through with the pupil;
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a copy of the EP report to the pupil and opportunities to talk it through; • using different techniques and methods to find out the pupil's views; • recording the pupil's views; and • dealing with possible differences between the pupil's and the parent/carer's views?
2	<p>Where you are considering submitting a request to the LA for a statutory assessment are there mechanisms in place for discussing/talking through with the pupil:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reasons for the request; • the EP report; • whether he/she meets with the criteria; • the different sections of an example anonymous statement; • what support school feels is needed/what the pupil feels is needed to meet their needs; • the implications what having a statement of SEN may mean, eg annual review/monitoring of targets/possible removal to another school/specialist provision/out-borough placement, etc; and • the timeframe of the statutory assessment and assessment required by the LA, eg EP/medical/social services, etc?
3	<p>Where a request for statutory assessment has been agreed by the LA are there mechanisms in place for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • linking the pupil with another pupil who has a statement for similar needs under the same criteria who is agreeable to share experiences; • an anonymous completed example statement to be available to talk through the different sections? • discussing what support school/the pupil feels is needed to meet his/her needs; • encouraging the pupil to draft his/her own response as part of the statutory assessment; • sharing the educational advice (required as part of the statutory assessment process and completed by school) with the pupil; • discussing the implications of having a statement of SEN; and • a named pupil (with a statement) who can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advise on the process and act as a mentor during the interim period of the assessment; - help the pupil complete the 'pupil views form' as part of the statutory assessment; and - act as an advocate for the pupil if required?
4	<p>When a statement is issued by the LA are there mechanisms in place for the pupil:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to be involved in the reviews; • to negotiate the level and type of support required; • to have peer support to from other statemented pupils (with their agreement); • to review his/her own progress and to express their views whether they feel the statement should be maintained; • to discuss how a statement may cease – linked to the relevant criteria; • to be encouraged to keep a 'learning log' to reflect on the experience of having a statement; and • to have a 'voice' and for his/her voice to be recorded regardless of their particular SEN?