

**A case study evaluation exploring
the perceptions and attitudes of an e-
learning programme for young
people who are non-mainstream
learners**

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Abstract

The Department for Education (DfE, 2014a, 2014b) stated that Young People (YP) with Special Educational Needs (SEN) may face many barriers which make it more difficult for them to get the support they need, achieve their potential and to succeed in education. The debate relating to what represents SEN, how YP with SEN should be educated and, indeed, where these YP should be educated is still a source for debate amongst researchers (Croll & Moses, 2003; Dyson, 2001; Norwich, 2009).

This thesis aimed to explore and evaluate the use of an e-learning programme (ELP) with YP who are non-mainstream learners, specifically those with Medical Needs (MN) and Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), through a mixed methods design. An attitude scale was designed and distributed to 31 YP in order to elicit their attitude to e-learning, enhanced with eight semi-structured interviews. The perceptions of eight staff were accessed through the use of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The main aims were to investigate the YP's attitudes and staff's perceptions, compare their views and see if anything could be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. All the staff and a high number of YP felt that the ELP was helpful in supporting them with their learning. Sub-areas such as social interaction, motivation and rewards emerged from the findings with suggestions for the ELPs future development. Implications for educational psychology practice and future research are considered.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Extended
AP	Alternative Provision
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DfE	Department for Education
ELP	E-Learning Programme
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
LA	Local Authority
MN	Medical Needs
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSC	Primary Support Centre
RQ	Research Question
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
YP	Young People/Young Person

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Thesis Rationale

This thesis reports a case study evaluation of an E-Learning Programme (ELP). The ELP was used within a Primary Support Centre (PSC) in the North West of England. Upon being appointed as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) in the Local Authority (LA) in which the research took place, the researcher accepted a partly commissioned role within the PSC.

The researcher's interest in the educational experience of Young People (YP) who do not access mainstream educational settings arose initially from working as a teaching assistant in a KS4 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). During this time, a number of YP with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and some with Medical Needs (MN) were taught, so the researcher developed a basic understanding of the needs and potential educational outcomes for this group.

Following appointment as a TEP within the focus PSC the researcher observed how the ELP was employed in the LA and the groups and individuals who were introduced to it. A proposal was presented to the EPS and PSC for a piece of research around the exploration and evaluation of the current ELP and the possibilities of developing it further. The researcher has had contact with vulnerable YP within her role as a TEP and her interest in YP with SEBD and MN within a PSC and e-learning was fuelled after she visited the PSC. The researcher was interested in YP who do not access mainstream educational settings, and those with SEBD and MN are a vulnerable group for whom it was

important to provide a platform to allow their voices to be heard (O'Connor et al., 2011; Thomas, 2007).

1.2 Thesis Context

The research took place within a PSC which was made up of a primary PRU, a secondary PRU, a medical needs support team, an extreme group (involvement with the Police, Youth Offending Service and/or Social Care) and the e-learning team. Prior to the research commencing, the PSC had been re-structured (September 2013) with a new management team, many staffing changes and new locations. In addition, there were plans for the PSC to move to academy status in April 2014.

The YP accessing the ELP at the time of the research were a vulnerable group who had either failed two supported transfers, were excluded from mainstream education, removed from the secondary PRU or were not able to access mainstream settings due to a MN.

Within the PSC, the ELP team had been established since 2006 and there was a clear, firm structure being followed. The e-learning manager shared previous case study evaluations which had demonstrated the positive impact of the ELP on the outcomes for the YP (Appendix 1). The ELP was being accessed by the YP both in their homes and in the PRU. Historically, it was predominately accessed by the YP in their homes but more YP were being encouraged to take part in small group sessions at the PRU. There were no current guidelines as to the number of sessions the YP were required to join at the PRU, nor was there any data as to the number of hours the YP were asked to log on for. Staff shared they encouraged the YP to access the ELP as much as possible and

similar to the amount of hours they would have spent in a mainstream school. Staff were allocated on average eight YP each and this meant they were that YPs tutor during their journey on the ELP. Staff were in charge of managing their own diaries and they had to ensure that each YP had at least one home visit per week for one hour. See section 3.5 for further details about the nature of the ELP used in this piece of research.

The ELP had received previous interest from nearby authorities and a scoping paper was created (Appendix 2). The scoping paper explored the potential to roll out the ELP on a wider footprint, identifying the benefits that may be achieved and suggested how such an approach could be delivered. There were initial plans for the ELP to be shared across other LAs but with the changes and restructuring, this was suspended. Following the completion of the current research, the findings could potentially reawaken the interest of e-learning within the PRU community and possibly be shared across other LAs.

1.3 Aims of the Research

The present study was concerned with exploring and evaluating the views and perceptions of the YP and staff that accessed the ELP during the summer term of 2014. The research asks what the YP's attitudes and staff perceptions of the ELP were in relation to areas such as learning, social skills, technology confidence and engagement. A sequential mixed methods design was used to examine the ELP from both the staff and YP's perspectives, to elicit their views, make any comparisons and see if anything could be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners. Crucially, the aim of the research was to relay these views back to the focus PRU with the aim of modifying the e-learning

package provided. By doing so, the focus PRU in the current study could identify 'what works and for whom' on the ELP and be able to make the necessary adjustments to their own personalised e-learning package. Very little research has explored the perspectives of YP who do not access mainstream educational settings and who access e-learning packages, so it was hoped that this research would raise awareness of e-learning within the PRU networks and more widely across the field of e-learning within educational settings.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to address the research aims and purposes the following research questions were proposed:

- 1. What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?**
- 2. How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?**
- 3. What are staff perceptions of the ELP?**
- 4. How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by the staff?**
- 5. How do staff views compare with the views of YP?**
- 6. What can be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners?**

1.5 Thesis Overview

A literature review was completed during September to December 2013, which helped provide a deeper understanding of the psychological theory and practical knowledge surrounding the areas of e-learning and YP in non-mainstream education. The study was designed and submitted in a research proposal for

ethical approval in March 2014. Data collection took place from May to July 2014. A detailed research timeline can be seen in Appendix 3.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE, 2014a; 2014b) stated that YP with SEN may face many barriers which make it more difficult for them to receive the support they need, achieve their potential and to succeed in education. The term 'SEN' covers a diverse group of people, of whom some may have highly complex needs and others may require less support.

The debate relating to what represents SEN, how YP with SEN should be educated and, indeed, where these YP should be educated is still a source for debate amongst researchers (Croll & Moses, 2003; Dyson, 2001; Norwich, 2009). Even with the government's expressions and a growing concern about YP at risk of becoming excluded from education they are rarely offered the opportunity to join this debate and have their voices heard (O'Connor et al., 2011; Thomas, 2007).

The purpose of this literature review was to report and critique relevant literature which explores the education of YP who are non-mainstream learners, in relation to the use of an ELP. An overview of government policy and initiatives regarding these YP will be presented, including the SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2015), the Academies Act (DfE, 2010) and the Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014a). Inclusion and achievement in relation to school and educational access for YP with SEN such as SEBD and MN will be explored. Terminology will be defined and statistics regarding this vulnerable population and outcomes for the YP will be presented. The objective of this review is to explore previous literature including that of ELP's, to develop a rationale for the current study.

Finally, a conclusion will be provided and implications of the literature review to the current research.

2.2 Government Policies

The Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a) and other initiatives since 2000, a 'radical reform of our schools' (DfE, 2010) and 'radically reforming the current system' (DfE, 2012a) are reminders of significant, on-going, change in policy affecting YP with SEN. Given the stated importance of their tasks, respectively, they seem short on reference to scholarly published research about how teachers in the UK or internationally perceive YP who present with SEN. This is despite the fact that the DfE (2010) refers to a crisis of perception by practicing teachers and by potential entrants to the profession.

Since the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government was formed in 2010, the coalition's education policies have differed drastically from those of the previous government. These changes have impacted upon schools, classroom practice, teacher training and SEN provision. This has major implications for all those within the education system including YP with SEBD and MN. The Conservative led coalition has introduced policies such as the Academies Act (DfE, 2010), which sees academies expanding and becoming more autonomous from the LA. This impacts upon the SEN provision, funds for support and even potential unfair admissions (Burton & Goodman, 2011).

YP may be out of mainstream education for a number of reasons which may include medical needs, exclusions or otherwise. Section 19 of the Education Act (1996) says that if a YP is of compulsory school age and they are out of education the LA are responsible for providing a 'suitable' education for the YP,

either at school or elsewhere. 'Suitable' education means effective education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the YP and to any SEN they may have. The number of hours for a YP aged between 11-16 years old in full time education is 24-25 hours per week. If a YP is not able to access mainstream education due to a medical need then the LA must intervene after 15 days and provide a minimum of five hours per week for the YP. For a YP with SEBD the LA can consider a part-time timetable but this must be regularly reviewed and increased when the YPs ability to cope improves.

The department of Health believed that YP with MN and SEN, have not always been well served by LA services in the past, due to the complexity of a disorganised system (DoH, 2014). The Children and Families Act 2014 (DfE, 2014a) introduced a new statutory framework for LAs to carry out more joint working to support YP with SEN. In addition a new SEN Code of Practice has recently been released (DfE, 2015). With so many policies and frameworks being presented from both the previous and current governments, it is unsurprising that there are inconsistencies in understanding how to respond to YP with SEN. Consequently this issue continues to be a persistent feature of educational debates (Burton et al., 2009).

2.3 Terminology

According to The Children and Families Act 2014 (DfE, 2014a, section 20.) a YP can be defined as having SEN *'if they have a learning difficulty or disability, which requires special educational provision to be made for them. A YP is defined as having a learning difficulty or disability if they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or if*

they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities provided for other YP of the same age in mainstream schools or post-16 institutions,(p19)'.

Many YP have difficulties that fit clearly into one of the four SEN areas provided in the new SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2015); Communication and Interaction, Cognition and Learning, Social, Mental and Emotional Health and Sensory and/or Physical. Some YP may have needs that cross two or more areas; for others the precise nature of their needs may not be clear. The SEN Code of Practice says that behavioural difficulties do not automatically mean that YP have SEN and therefore this should not lead to a label of SEN. It states that consistent disruptive behaviour can be a sign of unmet SEN, undiagnosed learning difficulties, difficulties with communication or mental health issues.

The terminology used to refer to YP who have difficulties in attending mainstream education because they have an additional need such as SEBD or MN has been heavily debated in the literature (Pellegrini, 2007). As highlighted by Kearney (2003), research has used overlapping and inconsistent terminology.

The terminology used within the literature was reviewed and considered below, informing the terminology adopted in the present study.

2.3.1 Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)

What is SEBD?

Kauffman and Lundrum (2006) imply that what is referred to today as SEBD has always existed, although it may have been known by other names. Daniels and

Cole (2002) refer to SEBD 'as the difficult to define category of YP' (p.132), and they discuss 'SEBD' as problematic, unsuitable and difficult. However the previous code of practice presented characteristics of SEBD to include lack of concentration and the presentation of challenging and disruptive behaviour (DfES, 2001a). Hence, established school norms setting out how a YP was expected to behave in the classroom environment were particularly difficult for a YP labelled with SEBD to adhere to.

Armstrong (2013) conducted a brief review of published research papers since 2000 on the topic of SEBD. Many definitional challenges were found in reviewing this area. SEBD, BESD, EBD or behavioural difficulties were referred to by different research papers. Indeed, several of the papers captured by this brief review made extensive comment on the numerous implications for research, practice and policy arising from variation in the use of terminology (Armstrong & Hallett 2012; Goodman & Burton 2010; Macleod 2006).

2.3.2 Medical Needs

What are medical needs?

YP with health care needs can vary widely in the complexity of their needs. There are thousands of medical conditions and so it was difficult to limit the research that was available (Forrest et al., 2011). Literature suggests that 30 years ago the term 'special health care needs' did not exist (McPherson et al., 2004).

Kirk (2008) uses the term 'complex healthcare needs' to describe YP with ongoing medical needs that require the support of a range of professionals and

agencies. The literature suggests that the health of YP was directly related to their school performance. Health can directly affect a YP's cognitive abilities, social and emotional skills and engagement in the learning process (Forrest et al., 2011). In 2014 the government produced statutory guidance for ensuring that schools and services provide the relevant support for YP with MN (DfE, 2014c). Their aim was to ensure that all YP with a MN, in terms of both physical and mental health, are properly supported in school so that they can play a full and active role in school life, remain healthy and achieve their academic potential.

The ethical issues surrounding the uncertain definition of SEBD and MN, need to be seriously considered (Mathur, 2007). If we struggle as professionals to clarify a consistent term to describe these YP then surely the challenges and dilemmas will continue. Apprehension and concerns about the concepts of SEBD and MN and the many vague or contradictory definitions may have left many YP without the adequate support or services they require.

2.3.3 SEBD and MN in the current study

The terminology around SEBD and MN has been described to some extent above. As the labels of SEBD and MN were imposed on the research due to the terms being used in the focus setting, these are the terms that the researcher has chosen to adopt within the study.

Despite the Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) combining this group of YP under one area of need '*social, mental and emotional health*', for the purposes of this research SEBD and MNs will be presented as two separate types of need. This population of YP can be described having a SEBD need or a MN. The term

SEBD was used to describe YP who have presented with challenging behaviour and have therefore been excluded from mainstream education. Within this research the term MN presents YP who have anxiety, eating disorders, muscular dystrophy, autism and other related MNs which mean they are not able to access mainstream education or have been excluded from mainstream education.

2.4 Statistics for YP with SEBD and MN

A survey of all Directors of Children's Services in England undertaken by the Thomas Coram Research Unit (TCRU, 2008) estimated that between 288,000 and 513,000 YP in England are 'disabled'. The mean percentage of 'disabled' YP in LAs has been estimated to be between 3% and 5.4%. If applied to the focus LA used in this research this would equate to between 1,915 and 3,447 YP experiencing some form of disability. However, The National Child and Maternal Health Intelligence Network (2014) provided prevalence rates for the LA used in this research suggesting that there are 13,462 aged 0-19 year olds living with longstanding illness or disability. This is a major discrepancy between the estimated number of YP and the figure presented of 13, 462, implying that the LA in this piece of research has high above the estimated average number of YP with longstanding illness or disability.

According to the DfE (2014d), the number of YP who were permanently excluded from schools in England, during 2012-13, was 146, 070, of whom 84% were from secondary schools. There was no reliable data for the number of YP accessing Alternative Provisions (AP) but it was estimated that there were over

30, 000 YP in PRUs or APs across the UK (DfE, 2012b). This highlights the vast number of YP who require some form of specialist support each year.

2.5 Responses to SEBD and MN

Bethall et al. (2012) suggests that the complexity of the YP's needs can influence the amount and type of health care and educational support they will require, directly affecting their school experience, motivation to learn and success in education. A MN such as asthma does not seem to be associated with academic performance, while it was believed that YP with ADHD received lower grades (Loe & Feldman, 2007). Osher et al. (2007) said that YP who were considered to be at risk of SEBD achieved the 'poorest outcomes' in academic progress. Educational attainment is important for all YP but so is engagement, motivation, social interaction and YP who are engaged and motivated will display more effort and participation towards their educational achievements (Connell et al., 1991; Finn, 1989). Vulnerable YP have constant challenges to contend with and so if they do not attend or participate in school life this can lead to their needs being unmet, feelings of isolation, disengagement and potentially school failure (Bethall et al., 2012).

It is important for teachers and staff working with vulnerable YP to take in to account the lack of motivation and engagement they may show towards education and learning. This may present as a challenge for some staff, particularly if there has been little or no training around meeting the needs of vulnerable YP. Staff who work with YP with SEBD and/or MN may require specific training and support in order to address and manage the challenges they face. In addition to motivation and engagement, challenges may include

managing behaviours, lack of knowledge of SEN and MN, providing an appropriate learning environment and an efficient education.

For YP with SEN, ideas of how best to provide an effective education have gone through several changes (Burton & Goodman, 2011). The previous Labour government, in power from 1997 to 2010, identified inclusion into mainstream school as the key to educating YP with SEN. Consequently, a number of policy changes were implemented by the Labour administration (DfES, 2001a/b, 2004) to increase the rights of YP with SEN to receive their education in mainstream school. However, the Conservative led coalition government appear to be moving towards a more discrete, specialist provision for YP with SEN. The introduction of the Academies Act (DfE, 2010), reduced budgets for LAs and the privatisation for some services within LAs has raised uncertainties about the future of SEN and inclusive education.

The DfE (2015) have recently provided statutory guidance for the education of YP with SEN, including SEBD and MN. Yet there was little research evidence available which provides clear guidelines as to the educational interventions and provisions most likely to make a significant difference for YP with SEBD and MN.

2.5.1 Schooling YP with SEBD and MN

The issue as to whether YP with SEBD and MN should be educated in mainstream schools or not (Cooper, 2008) is still ongoing. Research suggests that with appropriate whole school approaches and early interventions, inclusion within mainstream settings can become manageable and achievable (Cooper et al., 2000; Munn et al., 2000). There are times, however, when the most

appropriate setting for vulnerable YP is outside of the mainstream classroom. The Steer Report (2009) proposes AP for those with SEBD, whose needs cannot be met in mainstream, recognising individual needs and not a 'one size fits all approach'. Organisational differences between schools have also been found (Dyson et al., 2004), in their use of learning support units, alternative curricula and the existence of off-site units.

It was this vulnerable group of YP who can find access to the curriculum difficult and are often referred to learning support units or PRUs, where they follow a bespoke education programme prior to compulsory reintegration. This brings into question the extent to which these vulnerable YP are being 'included' in mainstream schooling.

2.5.2 Non-mainstream settings

The role of PRUs has been redefined and expanded by government initiatives. According to the DfES (2007), PRUs are educational settings for YP of compulsory school age, who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion from mainstream and special schools. They are also for YP who are sick, pregnant or without a school place (DfES, 2002; Meo & Parker, 2004; Michael & Fredrickson, 2013). Sometimes they are referred to as 'short stay schools' (Solomon & Thomas, 2013), as they are a place where the YP's needs are assessed following which they can be more appropriately placed. A high percentage of YP accessing non-mainstream settings have SEN (75%), and many of them have SEBD (DCSF, 2008). PRUs are the main form of AP for YP with SEBD in the UK, who are more likely than other populations to be excluded

or drop out from mainstream education (Cooper et al., 2000; Jull 2008; Visser et al., 2005).

The UK's Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2007) highlighted that a key factor for success in PRUs was staff sharing with the YP that they offer a 'second chance' or a 'fresh start'. The effect from doing this was that there was the possibility of increased understanding of the needs of the YP, through assessment and formulation, and that there can be some kind of change, either within the individual student, their environment, or both. This then meant that the YP could be placed appropriately, with professionals and agencies working together (Solomon & Thomas, 2013).

The Education Act (2011) presented the vision of allowing PRUs the freedom to become an AP academy, in order to raise the standard of this sector of education for vulnerable YP. A Public Accounts Committee report from 2011 stated that academies had achieved academic improvements and raised aspirations in some of the most challenging schools in the most disadvantaged areas of England (DfE, 2012c). It was believed that allowing PRUs the opportunity to convert to an AP Academy would improve organisation and raise standards for the YP. However, the PRUs would be accountable for their outcomes and inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) would inspect them according to the same standards as mainstream schools.

2.5.3 Alternative Provisions

There have been a number of studies looking at what happens to YP who are excluded from PRUs (Harris et al., 2006; Pirrie & Macleod, 2009). Pirrie et al.

(2011) found that there was a range of APs, with evidence for many personalised packages for the YP, which included outreach support (Timmins et al., 2003), shared placements (Harris et al., 2006), work experience, sessions with support workers and/or therapists including counselling (Polat & Jenkins, 2005) and, as a last resort, residential provision (Harris et al., 2006). What was clear from the data collected was that it was the quality of the personal relationships which people viewed to be most important in finding the right provision for the YP. It was the person who made the YP feel of worth that was vital within the process. This was supported by the findings of Daniels et al. (2003) who also found the commitment and skills of the staff involved to be most important.

An ELP can be created to address the need for more personalised learning, it can explore how technology can give YP access to education where it has not been possible otherwise and also as a tool to try and engage vulnerable YP. The ELP in this research was developed to cater for disaffected YP within the LA, giving them access to a secure online community day and night in addition to providing a personal tutor and a number of other services.

In the US, Florida Virtual School (FLVS) was an online school for YP that could be accessed independently or as an accompaniment to traditional schooling. In 2009-10 FLVS worked with more than 97,000 YP. A survey suggested that 53% of parents believed that their child learnt more in the FLVS than in a traditional school, 31% felt that their child's learning was the same and 3% felt their child learnt less accessing the FLVS. Views from the YP indicated that 58% felt FLVS was better than traditional school experiences and 7% felt it was worse (DfE, 2011).

There are some LAs across England which offer ELPs to vulnerable YP, some of which include:

Apricot Online Learning, a provider of online learning, teaching YP who require AP. They strive to include, motivate and engage YP through the use of technology, accommodating a range of YP with needs from physical and mental health and SEBD. (<http://www.apricotlearningonline.co.uk/>, accessed 28.2.14)

EdLounge was created in 2009, another online learning provider, which aims to increase achievement and improve behaviour and attendance. It educates vulnerable YP with over 6,500 lessons in core, foundation and vocational subjects. (<http://www.edlounge.com/>, accessed 28.2.14)

A more established online provider was BKSB, who write, develop and supply interactive solutions to meet GCSE criteria as well as functional skills. They support schools, organisations and individuals to improve their skills and fulfil their potential (<http://www.bksb.co.uk/home/>, accessed 28.2.14).

Despite the growing number of ELPs available there was no research to highlight their effectiveness. Case studies and testimonials are presented on each of the websites above but they have not been subject to independent scrutiny. Ofsted reviewed the use of technology with YP, but not with YP with SEN or out of mainstream education and commented on the benefits gained by learners. It concluded that technology was contributing positively to the personal development and future economic well-being of YP. It developed their skills of working both independently and cooperatively and in most cases was motivating and engaging (Ofsted, 2009).

2.6. What is E-Learning?

With advancements in technology, there has been significant change with practices and communication associated with teaching and education; this ranges from basic emails to the wide choice of tools available through the internet. Society and education have embraced these new technological methods over the years (Moore et al., 2011).

One of these advancements was e-learning, which dated from the early 1980s. From as early as 1996, Moore and Kearsley described e-learning as the concept of distance between the teacher and YP. They present a general systems model that describes the main component processes and elements of an ELP. They believe there are common components which should be found in all types of e-learning, these include:

- Sources (YP's needs, organisation, theory, philosophy)
- Design (Instructional design, media, program, evaluation)
- Delivery (Print, audio recordings, software)
- Interaction (Instructors, tutors, admin staff, YP)
- Learning environment (Workplace, home, classroom)

They believed that electronic technologies would open up a wide range of exciting new ways in which staff could interact with YP and provide different tools to present the information being taught. They said that e-learning aimed to provide teaching in places and times of convenience for the YP, rather than the staff and establishments.

Paloff and Pratt (1999) emphasised that YP's participation was essential to take an active part in the learning process. It was up to them to make sense of the body of knowledge associated with e-learning. The teacher was there to support the learning process through active discussions, collaborative assignments, and the development of critical thinking and research skills.

Ally's (2004) model shows the importance of learning components involved in e-learning and suggests that it was not the online environment or the resources which allow for learning but the sequence of instructions, the variety of learning activities and achievement of outcomes. Behaviourist, Cognitivist and Constructivist theories are also believed to have contributed to e-learning in different ways. Behaviourist strategies are used to teach the facts, the what, the how, the principles and processes come from the cognitivist theories and the real-life and personal applications of the contextual learning was derived from the constructivist theory.

The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta, 2010) reported that school staff were generally enthusiastic about using technology with YP but skills gaps did exist and many staff would benefit from further training in the use of technology, personalising learning and further awareness of the devices readily available to YP. 73% of ICT coordinators in special schools were reported to be enthusiastic users of technology. Underwood (2009) found mainstream school staff reported that the more technology was integrated into the school, the larger its effect on teaching and learning.

2.6.1 E-Learning for non-mainstream learners

E-learning is a new style of learning; it is a more recent approach to the distribution of knowledge, offering YP, not just those with SEN, more control over the learning process. The rise of e-learning is becoming more recognised but one of the difficulties with researching e-learning was the variation in how it was referred to, and the different terminologies that were used within the literature (Homan & Macpherson, 2005). As the area develops and expands so do the names and definitions. Thus, it was difficult to develop a generic definition but also to carry out reviews and comparisons of previous studies. The main terminologies that were used include distance learning, e-learning, internet learning, virtual learning and online learning (Ally, 2004; Moore et al., 2011). There was also variance in the use of the term 'teacher', as some used adult, staff, instructor, educator and tutor. All of the terms implied that the learner was at a distance from the 'teacher' and that some form of technology was used to access the learning materials and to interact with the teacher.

Moore et al. (2011) carried out a mixed methods analysis of research articles to investigate how the terminology for e-learning was being used. The results found that there was an inconsistent use of terminology for different types of delivery methods and environments. Also with the different terms came different expectations and perceptions of e-learning. Just as with the traditions of face to face teaching and the vast differences within that environment, the same can be said for the differences with e-learning environments. It was believed that e-learning would continue to become increasingly more diverse to respond to different learning styles, cultures and motivations (Ally, 2004). In the present

research, e-learning has been defined as interactive learning via computers over the internet, intranets or specific programmes.

2.6.2 Why use it?

The government policies around the educational entitlement of YP who are out of mainstream education, section 2.2, clearly state that the LA is required to provide a 'suitable' education to YP depending upon their age, ability, aptitude and consideration of any SEN. However, there is no fixed answer as to what makes a 'suitable' education for YP. The Local Government Ombudsman, (LGO, 2011) advises that the LA should work out what is suitable for the YP and their individual needs but to use full-time education as the starting point. The education should cover the core national curriculum subjects and can take place in a school, PRU, or provision made by a private or voluntary sector; this would include the use of an ELP. Using an ELP in isolation to educate YP with SEBD and MN should be treated with caution. The number of hours the YP spend accessing the ELP, the level of work they are presented with and the suitability of the ELP as a learning tool for these YP will need to be carefully monitored and adapted accordingly.

Becta (2009) provided a technology review which suggested that the use of e-learning within mainstream schools has dramatically increased. In 2008-2009 79% of secondary schools had a learning platform, almost doubling over each year previously (Teeman et al., 2009). Despite this increase a lower percentage of school staff reported regular use of the learning platform for example, 40% of secondary staff reported using their learning platform a few times or more per month. The review provided support that school staff agreed that use of

technology could have a positive impact on the achievement of YP. Around 90% of school staff in primary, secondary and special schools agreed that technology could have a positive impact on learners with SEN. More staff felt that technology had an impact on these learners than any other group (Teeman et al., 2009).

In addition to e-learning increasing knowledge, it also allows for YP to learn about the technology as they use it. YP are able to learn about their own learning style, how to collaborate with others to problem solve and also how to pace themselves to achieve the outcomes (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). E-learning allows for flexibility of access from anywhere at any time and potentially allows YP to manage their time and space (Ally, 2004). Within this process they then become more confident in their abilities and develop the work ethic that best suits them. These skills gained from e-learning are potentially transferable to the work place.

The ultimate goal of e-learning was to make education available to anyone, anywhere, at any time. However, this goal cannot be achieved unless the e-learning environments and resources are designed to be accessible to all prospective YP, including those with SEN. Burgstahler et al. (2004) looked at computer access for YP with SEN and staff within one university. They concluded that in order for e-learning opportunities to be accessible then careful consideration needs to be made during the design of the e-learning environment and also with the support provided during the process.

The ability to bring together diverse YP within e-learning environments provides an expanding opportunity for creative education and teaching. Lagier (2003)

explored the concerns, as well as the potential for development within e-learning for multicultural populations. She believes that e-learning provides accessibility to education that may have been previously inaccessible to the ethnic minority student. It also addressed the needs of underrepresented and marginalised cultures, opening the door to possibilities for minority populations and potentially acting as an instrument for social change (Stewart, 2004).

2.6.3 Effectiveness of E-Learning

E-learning has unquestionably changed the way YP are educated. It was perceived to be effective in reaching those YP who were once deemed 'hard to reach', whether this be for a specific SEN or MN. With the developments in technology and the evolving methods of teaching, then surely e-learning will continue to change. Therefore the more educational settings, policies and governments who embrace the changes, the more concerns around e-learning will decrease and its use increase (Harper et al., 2004). One of the biggest concerns was how e-learning will change the educational system in the long term. As Roger Crawford stated: *'A generation of YP is emerging already immersed in a multimedia "data storm". Their understandings and expectations of the world are mediated through their experiences of multimedia and ICTs and these differ from those of preceding generations nourished on linear technologies. Educating these YP using models of teaching and learning that are grounded in concepts of knowing and understanding that are linear and finite will not help them succeed in a technological global factor where multi-disciplinary, holistic approaches predominate,(Crawford, 1999, p.50).'*

Zhang et al. (2004) listed the benefits of e-learning to be: time, location flexibility, cost-effectiveness, unlimited access to knowledge, learner centred and self-paced. The disadvantages were seen to be: lack of immediate feedback, increased preparation time for the tutor, not comfortable to some people, possibly more frustration, anxiety and confusion for those involved.

Some researchers believe that e-learning and technology can help YP develop a range of skills such as basic literacy and higher order thinking. Austin et al. (2009) found that enhanced use of technology in schools led to improved literacy, ICT and communication skills amongst YP, particularly in SEN schools.

It also offers new learning opportunities to YP, enhances their learning experiences with communications outside of school, and helps YP to value learning by applying their knowledge and skills to real life tasks (Cooze & Barbour, 2005; Valdez et al., 2000).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2005) study showed that the length of time YP had been using computers and their performance in a particular subject were correlated. They compared computer access and frequency of usage to YP's performance in the subject. However, the study found that the highest performances were from YP with a medium level of computer use rather than YP with the highest use.

2.6.4 Perceptions of and Attitudes to E-Learning

Reports of almost any major teaching innovation of the last 25 years include data on the perceptions and attitudes of the YP accessing it (Pierce et al., 2005). Otter et al. (2013) carried out a survey comparing e-learning with

traditional formats (classroom classes) with the perceptions of YP and staff. However these YP were not SEN or non-mainstream learners. The surveys used a series of Likert scales which measured:

- 1) Perceptions of online versus traditional courses,
- 2) Perceptions of YP who take online courses and YP's motivations for taking online courses,
- 3) Perceptions of staff members who teach online courses,
- 4) Demographic characteristics

The analysis showed that perceptions between staff and YP did differ. YP viewed e-learning as more self-directed, they felt more disconnected from the staff and fellow peers within the e-learning environment. Staff saw the role of the teacher as more vital to the success of the e-learning than the YP did.

Boling et al. (2012) found YP most liked e-learning for the social exchanges between peers and staff; they least liked having to learn by rote memory. An implication was for the staff to carefully consider the design of the e-learning environment and how to support the learning and motivation of the YP.

Becta (2009) assert that YP hold positive attitudes about technology and tend to view the internet, books, magazines, visual and auditory tools as important for learning. YP generally rate themselves highly in their ability to use technologies, although there are gender and age differences. For example, boys are likely to rate their internet skills more highly than girls; and eight year olds rated computers and the internet as less important for learning new things compared

to 12, 14 and 17 to 19 year olds (Davies et al., 2009). However, the degree to which boys are more skilled or just more confident remains an open question.

In 1997 Selwyn developed an instrument for measuring YP's attitudes towards computers. The scale was developed within the technology acceptance model (Davis, 1993; Kay, 1993), the tripartite model of attitude (Breckler, 1984) and theory of planned behaviour (Ajzan, 1988). His scale was based upon four sub-areas: *affect* (feelings towards computers); *cognition* (perceptions and information regarding computers); *behaviour* (behavioural intentions and actions with respect to computers), and *perceived behavioural control* (perceived ease, or difficulty, of using computers).

Garland and Noyes (2008) examined the use of computer attitude scales to determine their relevance and appropriateness by assessing four widely-used scales. They were found to have reduced validity but had maintained a level of reliability for use in today's society, however, the various sub-areas of the scales were found to reflect different aspects of attitude. Therefore, the more traditional computer attitude scales may not be as valid given the technology developments that have taken place.

One study looked at YP's internet attitudes to see if there was a difference between male and female perceptions, using the four sub-areas of Selwyn (1997). They found both males and females perceived similar levels of usefulness of the internet. Yet, the sub-areas of affect, perceived control and behaviour highlighted that males showed more positive attitudes towards the internet than females. This was interpreted to mean that males showed higher

confidence and lower anxiety when using the internet and they were more likely to use the internet more often than females (Tsai et al., 2001).

The MacArthur Foundation undertook the first ethnographic study of how YP in the US participate with technology and digital media. Ito et al. (2008) interviewed over 800 YP and conducted over 5000 hours of online observations. They reported that digital media allowed a style of learning that was less about consuming knowledge and more about interaction and participation.

Ito et al.'s. (2008) study supported the work of Chavez and Soep (2005) who identified an adult and youth collaboration. They felt with the increased participation from YP with technology rather than education preparing YP for jobs, they suggested thinking of education as a process of guiding YP's participation in life, to include social and community engagement. They concluded with recommendations to create online spaces that were designed for and relevant to YP.

As the literature suggested YP's attitudes and beliefs towards computers could affect their performance in using and learning with them. Generally positive attitudes and perceptions could be seen in increased effort in learning (Pierce et al., 2005). However, attitudes could be influenced by social and emotional context, personal constructs and they could change depending upon experiences. There were some concerns that attitudes may not be adequately defined or reliable (Ruffell et al., 1998). Many researchers distinguished attitudes from beliefs in that beliefs were not easily changed (Pajares, 1992; Pierce et al., 2005). In this research the term attitude tries to encompass both feelings and opinions about using an ELP.

As the use of technology is dramatically developing within education, it is important for professionals to be able to monitor the effectiveness and provide evaluations of the impact ELPs are having upon YP's learning journey. Meaningful knowledge of how YP and staff perceive the ELP they are accessing is an important step in being able to develop their own experiences and also develop the ELP.

2.7 Summary of the Literature Review

In this chapter the researcher reviewed the literature for the purpose of exploring the effectiveness of an ELP with a vulnerable group of YP within a KS3/4 PRU. There are large numbers of YP who need to be educated outside of mainstream settings. There are a selection of APs that are available to YP such as PRUs, outreach support and residential placements. However, it does appear that the use of ELPs is vastly growing as a tool to educate YP with SEBD and MN (Apricot Learning & EdLounge), yet there was no evidence based research to show the impact and effectiveness the ELPs are having with respect to non-mainstream learners.

E-learning was found to offer new learning opportunities to YP, helping them to value education (Valdez et al., 2000; Cooze & Barbour, 2005). Some research showed differences between the perceptions of YP and staff (Otter et al., 2013), with YP viewing e-learning as a more independent way of learning, isolating them from their peers, whereas Boling et al., (2012) found YP enjoyed the social interaction they experienced from their ELP.

As ELPs are clearly developing within education it is important for professionals to be able to monitor the effectiveness and provide evaluations on the impact

they are having upon YP's education. Knowing how YP and staff perceive the ELP they are accessing is an important step in being able to develop a better understanding of the ELP and subsequent development of the ELP. However, from the literature above, it appears this is the first research to focus on gaining the views of the YP and staff in relation to an ELP.

2.8 Implications of the Literature Review for the current Research

As a result of the literature review and numerous discussions with the PRU staff, the researcher aimed to explore and evaluate the views and perceptions of the YP and staff that accessed the ELP. The literature provided limited information regarding YP who do not access mainstream education and the views of YP and staff who access ELPs.

The current research differs from the previous DfE (2011) study 'What is the evidence on technology supported learning?' as that study focussed upon mainstream learners in the UK and internationally, providing satisfaction percentage comparisons. The other ELPs discussed in section 2.5.3 provided testimonials and individual, selected case studies, as did the current ELP in this research (section 1.2, Appendix 1).

It would be useful to evaluate the ELP used in one LA to identify 'what works and for whom', improve learning opportunities for a vulnerable group of YP, be able to make the necessary adjustments to their own personalised e-learning package and to supplement the current literature.

2.9 Research Questions:

In order to address the research aims and purposes the following research questions were proposed:

- 1. What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?**
- 2. How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?**
- 3. What are staff perceptions of the ELP?**
- 4. How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by the staff?**
- 5. How do staff views compare with the views of YP?**
- 6. What can be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners?**

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In the present chapter a rationale for the methodological approach employed to address the RQs is presented. The researcher's epistemological, ontological and axiological positions will be described, along with a critique of the chosen methodology. The mixed methods research design, quantitative, qualitative followed by integrated, will be described, including instruments used, reliability, validity, sample recruitment, the research process, data collection and data analysis methods employed. Limitations and ethical issues will also be considered.

3.2 Aims and Research Questions

There was limited research on the use of e-learning with vulnerable YP which specifically explored and evaluated the views and perceptions of YP and staff around a focus ELP. The present study asks:

- 1. What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?**
- 2. How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?**
- 3. What are staff perceptions of the ELP?**
- 4. How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by the staff?**
- 5. How do staff views compare with the views of YP?**
- 6. What can be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners?**

3.3 Philosophical considerations

3.3.1 Principles of the Pragmatic Approach

Pragmatism offers the most suitable foundation to inform this research.

Pragmatic values involve:

- Preferring action over philosophical stances
- Favouring inquiries over assumptions (Jang et al., 2008)
- Allowing all individuals to have their own unique interpretation of the world (Morgan & Morgan, 2009)
- Focussing on solving practical problems where explanations and hypotheses can occur
- Securing robust measures whilst also valuing depth of experiences and perspectives (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003)
- Being able to gather multiple perspectives
- Situations where qualitative and quantitative methods are seen as compatible (Patton, 2002).

Morgan (2007) suggests that a pragmatic approach places its emphasis on shared meaning and joint action, *‘The essential emphasis is on actual behaviour (‘lines of action’), the beliefs that stand behind those behaviours (‘warranted assertions’), and the consequences that are likely to follow from different behaviours (‘workability’)’* (Morgan, 2007, p. 67).

Here the lines of action are methods of research that are seen to be most appropriate for studying the RQs at hand. This research was led by the RQs and the actions needed to take in order to answer them. However, the researcher made a number of philosophical assumptions whilst undertaking the research. The focus of the research was towards providing information to inform the development of an ELP. The axiological, ontological and epistemological position of the researcher will now be discussed.

3.3.2 Axiology

Axiology can be thought of as the part of philosophy that studies judgements about values. It recognises that a researcher's underlying professional values may impact upon the way in which they select their research topic, carry out their research and interpret and report their findings. For this reason, Robson (2011) highlights the importance of the researcher ensuring that their research is both systematic, and ethically sound. Researchers working within the pragmatic paradigm view the ethical goal of research as seeking to gain knowledge in the pursuit of desired ends (Morgan, 2007). This was similar to what Christians (2005) described as the functional theory of ethics in that all that was worth valuing was a function of its results.

3.3.3 Ontology

Ontology is a part of philosophy that considers the nature of being. It considers the beliefs and expectations that individuals hold about what exists in the world they live in. It reflects on issues about what people believe is real. Ontology considers whether there is one reality, or several realities. According to Rorty (1991, p.24), '*The pragmatist simply does not have a theory of truth*'.

Fendt et al. (2008, p. 478) conclude that more important than truth are our personal beliefs of the facts and that the crucial test of a belief was the readiness to act on it. It was not relevant within the pragmatic approach whether or not something was true if no one acts.

Within this research a mixed methods approach was employed, to investigate the perceptions of the YP and staff from the focus PRU. A pragmatic approach allows that there is a single reality that can be measured, along with multiple realities that generate different meanings for different individuals. Every individual is different, every situation is different and there are alternative and multiple ways of seeing things (Schon, 1987). What we obtain on a daily basis in research should be viewed as provisional truths. Effectiveness was key to the pragmatic approach, establishing that the methods chosen can work to answer the RQs; '*only results count!*' (Maxcy, 2003, p.85).

3.3.4 Epistemology

Epistemology asks questions of how the knowledge about reality is understood. Hofer & Pintrich (2002) suggest that a person's beliefs and views about knowledge will impact upon their educational performance by affecting the ways in which they address research.

Using a mixed methods approach places the researcher between the two major paradigms of quantitative and qualitative. The researcher making the distinct choice of positioning themselves as either a positivist, separated from the research or an interpretivist, where the research and researcher are intertwined, was dependent upon the stage of the research. The pragmatic approach states that the meaning of something is determined by the practical experiences of a

belief of the world (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), so we think about what we do, observe what happens in our practical experiences and then try to observe the outcomes.

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) the pragmatist is free to research what interests them and is of value, using the results in ways that can bring about change and developments to those involved. This appeared to be an appropriate epistemological stand point from which to address the aims and RQs of this research, as the thesis aims to explore and evaluate the ELP in order to inform the future use of the e-learning package. The value of differing methods was also considered to address the aims and RQs. Within this study the participants had opportunities to express their perspectives through an attitude scale (YP), a questionnaire (staff) and semi-structured interviews (YP and staff). The researcher favours practical outcomes and from a philosophical stance believes in the existence of both subjective and objective orientations, utilising both deductive and inductive logic (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2002). A more objective position was adopted during the collection of quantitative data, whilst the purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to explore subjective views of the research participants.

3.4 Research Design

A mixed method case study evaluation was designed to collect, analyse, interpret and use the data to help understand the YP's attitudes and staff's perceptions of the ELP currently being used. The sequential design was planned to use an attitude scale and questionnaire to collect quantitative findings, followed by further qualitative investigations using semi-structured

interviews. In order to address all the RQs the findings were integrated to produce any comparisons and points for the future development of the ELP. The design chosen is discussed below in further details in section 3.4.2, 3.4.3 and 3.4.4.

3.4.1 Consideration of Methodology

It would have been possible to explore the research area using a selection of methodological approaches using either a qualitative or quantitative design. Alternative methodologies that were considered include ethnographic research and Q methodology.

An ethnographic study would have allowed for the researcher to be fully immersed in the life of the PRU, therefore obtaining a deeper understanding. However, this methodology would have meant the researcher would have had to accept a very different philosophical stance, that of a critical interpretivist. This was something that the researcher was not comfortable with, they are not politically minded, seeking to advocate for a marginalised group. The researcher was very aware of whom they are as a person and they are also aware of the TEP role that they have to adhere to whilst carrying out the current research. Being aware that the PSC was going through major transitions and changes was a factor that added to the researcher's decision.

Another possible approach was Q methodology. It may have been possible to carry out a Q set with the staff to explore their perceptions of the ELP, thus creating viewpoints of the group. Yet, the vulnerable group of YP with varying needs may have found the process of conducting a Q set quite complicated and difficult to manage. The cognitive demands of completing a Q set were

considered and therefore using a smaller number of items suggested that the attitude scale would prove more favourable over Q.

The purpose of the research was what drove the choice of methods (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, for this research in order to answer the proposed RQs in the best way possible, considering the context and resources available, a sequential mixed methods approach was chosen. A critique of the methodology employed is discussed in chapter five, section 5.9.2.3.

A case study evaluation was adopted and the design and methodology for the current research was influenced by the following factors:

- Appropriateness in addressing the RQs proposed
- Timescale and practical concerns
- Gathering a fuller picture from multiple points of view
- The opportunities and limitations of a pragmatic approach
- The boundaries of being placed in a focus PRU with a specific research sample
- Stakeholders commissioned an evaluation of the ELP

3.4.2 Case Study

A case study can be described as an approach that involves an in-depth exploration of a single case (McDuffie & Scruggs, 2008). A case may be an individual, a group, a classroom or even a school. Some researchers argue that case study can be a method or a type of research. Stake (2005) suggests that case study research was not defined by the methodology but the object of

study. He believes that the more the object of study was specific and restricted then the greater the basis for it being called a case study.

Yin (2009) identifies five steps in case study research design:

1. RQs: Chapter one presents the rationale and aims of the current research, leading to the six RQs
2. Propositions: This research does not include explicit propositions linked to the effectiveness of the ELP but clear areas of interest were identified to support the success of the ELP, see section 1.3.
3. Units of analysis: The case within the current research was the focus PRU; the units of analysis were the perceptions and attitudes within the ELP.
4. The logic linking the data to the propositions: Clear purposes to the research were presented linking data collection methods to the RQs as fully as possible, see sections 3.7 for further information.
5. The criteria for interpreting the findings: Mixed methods were used for data collection and further information of data analysis procedures can be seen in chapter four results. The validity and ethical considerations of the research have been accounted for and more detail can be seen in sections 3.10 and 3.12

The case study in the current research was the focus ELP within the specified PRU, where the researcher was a TEP.

3.4.3 Evaluation

There are a number of definitions that have been presented. In the *Encyclopaedia of Evaluation* (Mathison, 2005), a more general definition of evaluation was provided which saw evaluation as an applied inquiry process for collecting and producing evidence that results in conclusions about the value, quality, significance and worth of a program (Fournier, 2005). There are a number of alternative definitions that emphasise different characteristics of the evaluation process. Hadley and Mitchell (1995) define evaluation as '*Applied research carried out to make or support decisions regarding one or more service programs*' (p. 48).

Sometimes, evaluations are done, but no big decisions are made based on the results. Patton (2008) notes that evaluations can be used to reduce uncertainty about decisions that have to be made but many other factors influence program decisions, such as availability of resources and the political climate.

As this research was a case study evaluation of a specific ELP, it was important to gather the perspectives of all those involved with e-learning and to evaluate the perceptions of the YP and staff, using a method that would allow this. A pragmatic, sequential mixed method approach was the research method that was chosen and best allows for breadth and depth to provide a better understanding and provide a fuller picture (Johnson et al., 2007; Morgan, 2007).

3.4.4 Mixed Methods

Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) define mixed methods design as research in which the investigator collects and analyses the data, integrates the findings

and draws suggestions using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative approach provides general findings, yet was criticised for a lack of consideration of social factors. On the other hand, qualitative data values the impact of social and human experience, however it was subjective and rarely generalised (Breakwell et al., 2000).

A mixed methods design provides the opportunity to capture both the details of a situation and to add depth and context to quantitative results with qualitative data (Klassen et al., 2008); attempting to minimise the weaknesses found in a single method example, being subjective, non-replicable and non-generalisable (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed method approaches are also seen to be beneficial because they draw from the strengths of quantitative data which can offer prediction, replicable findings and possible generalisability of results; also using the strengths of qualitative data, of description and depth.

The present mixed methods sequential design used quantitative and qualitative strands chronologically. Explanatory designs consisted of two phases, beginning with the quantitative phase and then the qualitative phase, which aimed to explain or enhance the quantitative results (Doyle et al., 2009). In the present research specific quantitative findings were further explored using qualitative methods identified by the researcher and the qualitative strand helped in the development of further understanding the findings. The explanatory design required a longer implementation time due to the sequential nature but the results were able to highlight a personal experience perspective from the participants which can often be lacking from quantitative studies.

3.5 Research context

As stated in chapter 1.2 the researcher's university placement as a TEP was partly commissioned by the focus PSC in a LA. The PSC catered for pupils who were at risk of exclusion or had been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. The PSC had recently been re-structured (September 2013) with a new management team, many staffing changes and new locations. In addition, there were plans for the PSC to move to academy status in April 2014. The researcher had considered the transitional period the PSC was undertaking and was aware of the proposed plans and developments to the ELP.

The ELP area of the PSC was chosen as discussed in section 1.2. It was first developed in 2005 and formally implemented by the LA in 2006. It was a strand of the APs offered to YP who are not in mainstream education. According to the scoping paper (Appendix 2) the activities on the ELP encouraged YP to reengage with education, work towards self-created certificates and prepare for college and work placements. At the time of this research the ELP did not offer recognised qualifications or GCSEs, only personalised certificates created by the ELP staff.

The ELP handbook, published 2011, states '*It is a flexible educational programme which is predominately online with a personal tutor/student relationship that is nurtured through both the ELP and also face to face support, such as home visits, drop-in sessions and sports/activity days.*' At the time of data collection it provided education to approximately sixty year 10 and 11 YP across the LA on an annual basis, with eight members of staff. The ELP manager was not able to clearly define the admissions criteria at the time and

therefore the types of YP accessing the ELP were not initially clear to the researcher. The YP ranged from those who were classed as having MNs such as muscular dystrophy, to YP who could not access any other part of the PSC.

Each YP was provided with a home computer and broadband access for the duration of their time on the ELP. A learner interest-led curriculum was provided through individualised timetables, where learners negotiate their own programme of study. Most of the learning occurred at home and was regularly supported online by a personal tutor. All the YP had access to a one hour, face to face home visit from their tutor. Evaluations from the ELP found that most of the home learning occurred outside normal school hours, with 11am-1.30pm and 7-11.30pm being the most popular times. Accessing the ELP during these times flagged up concerns around YP's sleeping patterns and access to staff at these times. It was reported that some staff received phone calls from parents during the night. More recently the YP have been encouraged to take part in more small group sessions at the PSC, in a separate but linked building to the PRU.

The original name of the ELP has not been used within this study in order to prevent it from being easily identified. The researcher decided to use 'ELP' to refer to the specific programme focussed on within this study.

The PSC manager was first approached informally and this was followed up with an email explaining the purpose of the research. Meetings then took place with the PSC manager and the ELP managers for further discussions and negotiations. Both managers approved the research to take place and signed an agreement form (Appendix 4 shows an anonymised school form). Ethical

approval was also sought from the University's Ethics committee (See Ethics section 3.12 below for further information).

3.6 Research Sample

Due to the context of the case study methodology, the research took place in one area of the PSC using a fixed sample of participants. Emails were sent to the eight members of staff plus the ELP manager, with an explanation as to the purpose of the research, and information sheets were also attached to the emails (Appendices 5 & 6). The information sheets included contact details so any further questions could be answered.

The YP and staff who were involved with the ELP for the academic year 2013-2014 were contacted and invited to participate in the study. There were approximately forty-five YP accessing the ELP (information received in February 2014). Staff and YP were allowed up to one to two weeks to decide if they were willing to participate in the research. Parent and YP's consent was collected before the research proceeded. Appendices 7 and 8 show copies of the consent forms that were sent to all participants and their parents.

At the time of beginning the research the sample of YP accessing the ELP were aged 14-16 years old, in KS3 & 4. It was important to note that the YP who took part in the study joined the ELP at various times, from October 2012- June 2014. This information was collected by the ELP manager and was stored on their database.

Features of the sample that were considered were the potential individual needs of the YP who do not access mainstream educational settings and may have

SEBD and MN. The researcher sought advice from the relevant professionals as to their appropriateness for the research but a YP was not disregarded on this information alone. For this research the YP were KS3 and KS4, with one exception of a 19 year old YP with MN. They had all failed two supported transfers and/or a PRU placement, or were out of school settings due to a MN. The YP were in year groups 9 (n = 4), 10 (n = 15), and 11 (n = 12). Of the 31 YP, eight of them took part in a short interview. Eight female staff completed a questionnaire and participated in an interview. Table 1 below features some descriptive baseline information about the total number of YP (n=31), collected in June 2014.

Table 1: Descriptive baseline information of the 31 YP

YP code (n=31)	Gender	Year group	Chronological Age (in months)	Reading Age (in months)	Reading age disparity	Type of need	Total time logged on ELP (in hours)	Average time logged on per week (in hours)
1	M	11	200	180+	-20	SEBD	267.9	11.2
2	M	11	192	123	-69	SEBD	163.3	6.8
3	M	10	184	180+	=	Asperger's & related MN	123	6.2
4	M	10	201	151	-50	SEBD	19.5	1.2
5	M	11	238	151	-87	Muscular Dystrophy	196.8	8.2
6	M	11	201	180+	-21	SEBD	139.1	5.8
7	F	9	167	158	-9	Asperger's & related MN	103.2	4.3
8	M	10	203	96	-107	SEBD	141.3	5.8
9	M	9	175	151	-24	Anxiety	53.5	2.2

10	M	10	188	126	-62	Anxiety	34	2.1
11	F	10	183	146	-37	Anxiety	9	1.1
12	F	9	169	145	-24	Anxiety	20.5	1.3
13	F	11	195	144	-51	SEBD	142.5	5.9
14	F	11	195	144	-51	SEBD	141.7	5.9
15	M	11	185	177	-8	Anxiety &Eating disorder	64.5	2.7
16	M	11	192	167	-25	SEBD	21.5	0.9
17	M	10	188	92	-96	SEBD	24	1.2
18	M	10	186	148	-38	SEBD	3	0.75
19	F	11	191	168	-23	SEBD	15	1.3
20	F	10	185	161	-24	SEBD	125.5	5.2
21	M	10	183	146	-37	SEBD	1	0.25
22	F	10	185	151	-34	SEBD	55	2.3
23	M	10	188	167	-21	Anxiety	53.5	2.2
24	F	11	201	121	-80	SEBD	119.2	5
25	M	10	183	180+	=	SEBD	31.5	1.6
26	M	11	196	180+	-16	SEBD	55	2.3
27	M	11	201	168	-33	SEBD	206	8.6
28	M	10	183	138	-45	SEBD	47.5	2.4
29	M	10	182	158	-24	Anxiety & ASD	226.2	9.4
30	M	11	178	109	-69	Anxiety & related MH	2	0.4
31	M	10	170	174	-4	Anxiety	17	2.1

3.7 Research Data Collection Methods

Table 2 below provides an overview of the research collection methods used within this piece of mixed methods design research:

Table 2: Research collection methods used in this research

<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Research Collection Method</u>	<u>Sources</u>
1. What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?	Attitude Scale distributed to all 31 YP who gave consent to participate. ELP Statistics: year groups, gender, type of need, hours logged in to ELP over a specified period of time, average hours logged on per week and reading ages.	YP ELP manager and ELP data.
2. How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?	Individual semi-structured interviews carried out with 8 YP.	YP
3. What are staff perceptions of the ELP?	Online questionnaires distributed to all 8 members of the ELP staff team.	Staff
4. How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by the staff?	Individual semi-structured interviews carried out with 8 staff.	Staff
5. How do staff views compare with the views of the YP?	Staff online questionnaire. YP attitude scale. Semi-Structured interviews	YP and Staff
6. What can be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners?	Staff online questionnaire. YP attitude scale. Semi-Structured interviews	YP and Staff

3.8 Quantitative Research Instruments

3.8.1 Data from the ELP system

Data were collected from the ELP system in order to contribute background statistics and help answer RQ1, 5 and 6.

The data can be seen in table 1 and included information from the YP's profile: gender, medical needs status (if applicable), date started on ELP, total hours logged in to ELP over a period of one to six months and most current reading age. Using the start dates and total hours logged on the researcher calculated the average hours the YP logged on to the ELP per week.

3.8.2 Attitude Scale

The attitude scale was devised to answer RQ1, **What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?**

No previous research had used an instrument such as an attitude scale to explore YP's perceptions of an ELP. Questionnaire surveys had been previously found to explore the use of ELPs but the researcher felt that an attitude scale was deemed most appropriate for this research. It was felt that an attitude scale would be easier for the YP to read, understand and complete and it also limited the use of open ended questions. However, none of the available scales seemed suitable to directly use in order to answer the RQs within this study.

The researcher considered the following attitude scales:

- The Mathematics and Technology Attitude Scale (MTAS, Pierce et al. 2005),

- The Computer Attitude Scale for Secondary Students (CASS, Jones & Clarke, 1994),
- Computer Attitude Scale (CAS; Loyd & Gressard, 1984),
- 16–19 Computer Attitude Scale (Selwyn, 1997).

Selwyn's (1997) 21 item computer attitude scale proposed the following four subscales for computer attitudes: affect, perceived usefulness, perceived control and behaviour.

The MTAS looks at five subscales which include mathematics confidence (MC), affective engagement (AE), behavioural engagement (BE), confidence in using technology (TC) and attitude to the use of technology to learn mathematics (MT), with a total of 20 items. The MTAS has many ideas and some items in common with other published scales.

This research needed an instrument that was suitable for YP with SEBD and MN, potentially low reading ages, low levels of engagement and motivation. It needed to be a bespoke instrument that was specifically designed to look at the ELP. Using the basis of the MTAS, the researcher developed five sub-areas: behavioural engagement (BE), affective engagement (AE), technology confidence (TC), social interaction (SI) and attitude to learning with ELP (AL). From these sub-areas some of the statements were adapted from the MTAS, some were completely removed and new statements were included. The statements chosen were discussed with the university tutor, ELP manager and ELP member of staff. It was hoped that the statements selected would avoid

response bias and therefore some statements were negatively phrased so that the attitude scale was not a positive list of 30 items about ELP.

The researcher felt it was important to develop the attitude scale online as this was what the researcher envisaged would be the main platform for the YP.

However, after some further discussions with the ELP managers some barriers appeared part way through the data collection process. Some YP had finished for the year and therefore no longer had a computer to access the online version. Therefore, in order to ensure all the YP were able to take part in the study a paper copy of the attitude scale was created and shared with the staff to use with YP who chose this option. The YP then had access to the online version or a paper copy of the attitude scale and it was their decision as to which they chose to complete.

Converse et al. (2008) acknowledged a number of advantages of using online-based questionnaires: convenient access to participants, more interactive or tailored formats, reduced costs, faster responses and potential access to larger samples. Yet, research has also suggested that online-based questionnaires can be associated with lower response rates than for smaller scale, more targeted questionnaires (Dillman, 2007; Shih & Fan, 2008).

For the purposes of this thesis 'eSurvey Creator' was the online software the researcher used to create both the YPs attitude scale and the staff online questionnaire (<https://www.esurveycreator.com/>). This software was chosen because it was cost effective, easy to use and presented a format and layout that the researcher visualised for the online tools. Links to both tools can be found below:

YPs attitude scale- <https://www.esurveycreeator.com/s/0eb03f4>

Staff questionnaire- <https://www.esurveycreeator.com/s/41dafac>

The final attitude scale created consisted of 30 items, representing each of the five sub-areas. Brief instructions were presented at the start of the scale along with two practise items. It was intended that these items would determine if the participant understood the scale and the statements that were chosen on which the YP would rate their attitude. See Appendix 9 for a copy of the attitude scale, paper format or follow the link <https://www.esurveycreeator.com/s/0eb03f4> for the online version.

A Likert type scoring format was used for each of the sub-areas: BE, AE, TC, SI and AL, where participants were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with each statement, on a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree (scored from 1 to 5).

At the end of the 30 item scale three open ended questions were presented. The final questions asked what the participants liked about using ELP, if there were any problems or any changes they would make and a scaling question on which they could rank from 1 to 10 (1 being not happy to 10 being very happy) how happy they were using ELP.

Attention was given to the language used to ensure that it was clear to the YP. The attitude scale was presented in a simple, understandable format and each scale took approximately five to ten minutes to complete. Due to the scale having never been used before a pilot study was carried out using a similar sample.

3.8.2.1 Pilot study for the Attitude Scale

Pilot studies allow for changes to take place such as the instructions given, consideration of the item content, sequence and language. The YP's attitude scale was piloted in the summer term of 2014 with four Year 10 YP, who attended the KS4 PRU and had some knowledge and awareness of the ELP. The YP were chosen as they were believed to have similar needs to the final participants of the research. No difficulties were expected as a result of this piloting procedure. Findings from the pilot study helped to inform the development of the attitude scale used with the 31 YP.

Following discussions with the ELP manager and university tutor, the pilot study and the feedback received from the four YP, the following changes were made to the attitude scale:

- The wording of the scoring format was adapted from 'half the time' to 'neutral'
- Four items needed to be omitted or completely reworded as they had been misunderstood by the YP.
- It was decided that practise items would be added at the start of the scale to try and gain a level of the YP's understanding of the format of the scale.
- The brief instructions at the start of the attitude scale had to be more explicit in order for the YP to know that the focus was upon learning with ELP, not learning in general.

The modified attitude scale was completed by all 31 YP.

3.8.2.2 Attitude Scale Item analysis

An item analysis was carried out on the data collected to refine the attitude scale. According to Larsen and LeRoux (1983) in their comparison of factor analysis versus item analysis they concluded item analysis produces superior reliability and validity measurements by detecting and removing non-discriminant items. Also, exploratory factor analysis was not performed because of the small sample size ($n=31$) in the research. Nevertheless the researcher carried out a number of procedures to assess the reliability and validity of the attitude scale. Due to the sample size the split-half method was not used.

Field (2013) claims that the Cronbach's alpha was the most common measure of scale reliability. Cronbach's alpha values were used to estimate the internal consistency reliability of the attitude scale (Coolican, 2009; Ivankova, 2014). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the 30 item attitude scale of Likert-type fixed-response items was .864. See the results chapter for further details.

The 30 item attitude scale underwent an item analysis and the correlations were computed. Data from the 25% highest and 25% lowest total scoring YP were used for the item analysis, $n=14$ (Ferrando, 2012; Lord, 1980). Appendix 10 shows the correlation coefficients for each item in the attitude scale related to the YP's total score on the scale.

It was decided that the cut off point for correlation coefficients should be 0.33 and below, as decisions about removal of non-discriminatory items within general statistical literature indicates this point to show a moderately low relationship.

26 items with the strongest correlations ($r < 0.33$) were then selected; these items were considered to be most discriminant when related to the YP's total scores. Four items which were found to be less discriminatory in determining attitudes towards e-learning. Correlations ($r > 0.33$) were removed from the scale and these were:

1. I like to learn face to face with a teacher
2. I can fix a lot of computer problems
3. I like to work in a group when I am learning
4. I am good at using things like PS3/Xbox, MP3 Players and Smart phones

It was important to remember that the item analysis used the seven highest scoring YP and seven lowest scoring YP; therefore positive correlations would be expected for the data from these YP. From the list above 1 and 3 were all rated highly by the YP suggesting that all the YP disagreed with these items. Number 4 was generally scored at strongly agree for 11 of the 14 YP, implying that the YP were confident in using technology. Number two presented an overall neutral score from the 14 YP as eight YP rated it as neither. These four items did not help in understanding the YP's perception of the ELP and did not follow the pattern of correlating with the total score.

The four non-discriminatory items came from the two sub-areas of social interaction and technology confidence. Out of the five possible sub-areas the fact that the non-discriminatory items came from only two of these could prove to be quite noteworthy. These items could also have been unfavourable due to

the way in which they were written and the vocabulary that was used. The data provides no clear reasons why these items were non-discriminatory.

3.8.3 Online Staff Questionnaire

Questionnaires provide a valuable instrument to use when collecting a range of information from a widespread audience. However, there are a number of advantages and disadvantages of using a questionnaire, as presented in table 3 below, which were considered by the researcher so as to make use of the advantages and address the disadvantages (Edwards & Talbot, 1999; Mertens, 2005).

Table 3: Advantages and disadvantages of using a questionnaire

Advantages	Disadvantages
Practical and reliable	Reliant upon self-reporting skills
Able to administer to large groups of people	Limited restricted information provided
Standardised and objective	Low return rates
Quick to analyse	The validity is questioned

An online staff questionnaire was devised to answer RQ3, **What are staff perceptions of the ELP?**

This questionnaire was produced by the researcher and focused on staff perceptions of the ELP from a teaching perspective. The aim of the questionnaire was to establish an overview of views about the ELP and any emerging themes to address within the interviews to gather further explanations. Questions looked at YPs learning, behaviours, social interaction, engagement

and motivation, mirroring the YPs attitude scale sub-areas and also how useful the ELP was as a teaching tool. The questionnaire concluded with three open questions about the good, the bad and any changes to ELP they would make. A scaling question to rate how likely they would be to recommend ELP to others completes the questionnaire.

When designing the questionnaire, the researcher referred to the guidance provided by Mertens (2005, pp. 187- 205) with the aim of ensuring that the questions asked would provide answers to the RQs and meet the aims of the thesis.

As mentioned earlier, online-based questionnaires can offer advantages because of their ability to adapt such approaches as editing (being able to change the questionnaire), tailoring (adapting the questionnaire for the audience), and randomization (having no specific order to the items on the questionnaire), as well as avoiding interviewer effects and reducing costs (Couper, 2005). Format options are also increased because of the possibility of using colour and graphics, videos, handwriting recognition, increased storage capacity, and possibly even touch-screen tools; of these options only colour was available to the researcher due to the software package used. Another advantage of online-based questionnaires lies in the observation that people often respond quickly to questions as they move from screen to screen (Stern, 2008).

The format of the questionnaire was designed and created by the researcher. The questionnaires were created using the software on the 'esurveycreator.com' website and the link was emailed to the staff on one set

day with a time for it to be completed by. All questionnaires were presented in a simple, understandable format and it was estimated each questionnaire would take approximately five to ten minutes to complete. See Appendix 11 for a copy of the staff questionnaire, paper version or follow the link <https://www.esurveycreator.com/s/41dafac> for the online version.

3.8.3.1 Pilot study for the online staff questionnaire

During development of the staff questionnaire it was shared with the researchers' university tutor and with the ELP manager. After suggestions and developments were made the researcher then uploaded the questionnaire online.

The questionnaire was piloted online with one ELP manager and the ELP admin person, they were chosen due to limited numbers of staff, time constraints and with the purpose of the pilot to ensure ease of use of technology.

Following discussions and the pilot, the following changes were made to the questionnaire:

- The option to allow staff to extend their answers qualitatively was added.
- Some individual questions needed to be reworded as they had been misinterpreted.
- It needed to be made clear to the staff that once they had started the questionnaire online they had to complete it in one period of time.

3.9 Qualitative Research Instruments

3.9.1 Individual Semi-structured Interviews

To answer RQ2 '**How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?**' and RQ4 '**How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by the staff?**'

participants were able to opt in to the short individual interviews. The interviews offered could take place in a number of different ways, all of which were familiar to the YP and staff, these include:

- Face to face, either in the participant's home or at the PRU
- Virtually, arranged on specific day either via Skype (used by the tutors for virtual sessions with the YP) or the chat room (also used within the ELP portal)
- Over the telephone

Despite all the options, all interviews took place face to face in a quiet room in the PRU. A member of staff was on hand during the YP's interviews in case any ethical dilemmas arose and to minimise any adverse effects but they were not present during the actual interview, to try and limit any bias and influence they may have had on the results. Interviews were expected to last no longer than 20 minutes.

The interviews were designed to collect further detail and explanation to some themes that were highlighted from the attitude scale and online staff questionnaire. It provided an opportunity to better understand the reasons and motivations for the YP's attitudes and the staff's views. The interview prompts and questions were derived from an initial basic analysis of the questionnaire and attitude scale results and a consideration of the RQs and aims of the thesis.

Interview prompts and questions were kept straightforward and simple in the use of language chosen (Appendix 12).

Interviews were semi-structured in that the researcher had the flexibility to ask the questions in an alternating order, omit questions that did not appear appropriate and add questions based upon each participant's responses.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out by the researcher over a period of approximately two weeks. Each semi-structured interview was carried out individually, and recorded on a digital Dictaphone with the interviewee's permission. This recording was then transcribed in order for thematic analysis to take place. The researcher developed positive relationships with the ELP staff and some of the YP during the research process. It was acknowledged that these positive relationships could have both advantages and disadvantages and this is discussed further in the limitations section. The researcher believes that this positive relationship encouraged the staff to make time to participate in the interviews. All staff and YP were given the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time. The attempt to limit interviewer effects was considered and interviewer bias was also taken into consideration; the researcher had carried out a number of varied interviews before, in addition to working closely with both YP and teaching staff.

The researcher did consider the option of using a focus group in place of the semi-structured interviews. Focus groups are believed to be an efficient method of data collection and participants can be stimulated by comments and thoughts from others (Robson, 2011). In spite of these advantages the researcher decided to use a semi-structured interview; the researcher wanted to gain the

individual views of each member of staff and some of the YP. The researcher considered focus groups but was aware that strong personalities can take over in group situations making it difficult for less assertive members to speak (Bell, 2005). Group members may also minimise their views or not say anything at all if they feel it was opposing the main opinion (Denscombe, 1998).

3.10 Ensuring reliability and validity

In order to strengthen the validity and reliability of the research a number of logical steps were taken. Throughout the design stage, the attitude scale, the online staff questionnaire and interview templates were discussed with the ELP manager, a chosen member of the ELP staff and the researchers university supervisor.

The questionnaire, interview prompts and pilot studies were thoroughly discussed and revised with the ELP manager, ELP member of staff and university supervisor. This enabled the researcher to consider the links between the research questions and the online questionnaire and interview prompts and remove any unnecessary questions. To try and increase descriptive validity the interview transcriptions were listened to a number of times to guarantee the accuracy.

Using a fixed sample of participants meant that the findings would have to be carefully considered due to the representativeness of the research sample. A mixed methods approach was used to try and round the findings as much as possible.

Due to this research employing a mixed methods approach the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data would produce more rounded findings. With findings from a range of methods this could be viewed as a form of triangulation (Fielding, 2012; Torrance, 2012). The purpose of triangulation to enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings, defined in a number of ways such as, cross checking data to produce more accurate results, a method of checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003), and providing a more detailed and balanced picture of a situation (Altrichter et al., 2008).

3.11 Research Procedure

The online staff questionnaire was accessed by staff during June and July 2014. The YP accessed the attitude scale using the online version or the paper version over a period of four months, due to consent collection, during the months of June, July and September 2014. Consent collection entailed gaining parental/carer signatures for all YP willing to take part in the research and also signatures from the eight members of staff who agreed to take part. Following on from the collection of these data, the researcher carried out a brief analysis of the respondent's answers for the YP and staff being interviewed. Semi-structured interviews took place as planned at the end of June 2014, this meant those YP who were completing their education in summer 2014 were not able to volunteer for interview due to having completed their academic year in Year 11. The timeline of the data collection procedure is outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Data Collection Procedure

Procedural event	Purpose	Time
Pilot study for YP attitude scale	To allow for changes to take place such as changes to the instructions, and consideration of the item content, sequence and language, in order to inform the development of the final attitude scale.	May 2014
Pilot study and Online staff questionnaire accessed by staff	To gather the perceptions of staff to the ELP; to answer RQ 3 & 4.	June & July 2014
YP's attitude scale accessed by YP	To gather the perceptions and attitudes of the YP to the ELP; to answer RQ 1 & 2.	June, July & September 2014
Look at the answers provided in questionnaire and attitude scale	To develop an initial basic analysis of the questionnaire and attitude scale results for the individuals participating in the interviews, whilst considering the RQs and aims of the thesis.	June 2014
Conduct semi-structured interviews with YP and staff	To collect further detail and depth to some themes that were highlighted from the attitude scale and staff questionnaire.	June 2014

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Key ethical challenges were explored using the guidelines developed by different sources: the University of Sheffield's School of Education, and agreed with The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC); the professional code of practice from the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2009); the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC), Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HCPC, 2009); and the researcher's own ethical principles and moral judgements. Ethical approval for this research was received from Sheffield University in May 2014 (Appendix 13).

In line with the Code of Ethics (BPS, 2009) there were ethical considerations the researcher was aware of when conducting the research. The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009) offered guidelines for psychological researchers to consider when undertaking research, these included: informed consent, right to withdraw, protection of participants, confidentiality, proper conduct, debriefing, and avoidance of deception.

3.12.1 Informed consent

It was vital that both the staff and YP were given full information about the proposed study and they provided consent on the basis of the information provided to them.

Written information was provided to all participants, stating clearly that their involvement was for a research study. It was written in terms that all participants were able to understand and it fully explained what each participant was required to do. Customised information sheets and consent forms were produced for staff and YP (Appendices 5, 6, 7 & 8) that provided all the information about the study and what 'participation' entailed.

Informed consent was obtained from all the participants (Appendices 7 & 8). Consent from the PRU and ELP managers was collected; written consent was also obtained from each member of staff involved and guardian consent was collected for each YP.

3.12.2 Right to withdraw

At any point during the study both the YP and staff had the right to withdraw or decline to answer particular questions. It was vital that they were aware of this

right. Information about withdrawal rights was included in the relevant information sheet. As with informed consent, any participant who wished to exercise this right was able to contact the researcher and have their details/data removed from the study.

Participants were made fully aware that participation was entirely voluntary, refusal would attract no sanction and they would not be required to provide reasons for refusal; if they agreed to participate they were free to leave the study at any time without being required to give any reasons.

3.12.3 Avoidance of Deception

There was no intentional deception of participants at any time during the research. The aims of the research were made clear through the use of the information sheet. Researcher contact details were provided to all participants to enable them to ask the researcher any questions if they wished to.

3.12.4 Right to anonymity/confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality was made explicit to the participants and was maintained throughout the study. No names were used anywhere within the research and all participants were coded in order to track data. No rewards were offered for participation in the study. It was crucial that participants anonymity was secure at all points in the study. All data were stored on a secure shared drive in a password protected folder which only the researcher could access and will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

3.12.5 Researcher Competence

Throughout the study, the researcher ensured that they always operated within the limits of their knowledge, skills, training and experience. Although no ethical dilemmas arose, supervision was received from the university tutor and placement supervisor and any such issues could have been discussed at these times.

3.12.6 Data collection burden on participants

The need to minimise the burden placed upon participants by participation in the research was something that was considered carefully. The scale and questionnaire were developed to ensure that wherever possible only the minimum of questions of direct relevance to the current study, were included. However it was possible that when completing the questionnaire or during the interview a YP may have become moderately distressed. In light of this, a member of staff was always on hand to ensure that adverse effects were minimised at all times. If any participant became upset or embarrassed during the course of the questionnaire or interview, the option to cease was offered immediately and help sought from an appropriate member of staff within the school. During all parts of the data collection this did not happen.

In the case of interviews with YP, additional information was provided prior to the interview commencing that clearly explained that certain information relating to threats to their wellbeing (e.g. disclosure of information about abuse) would be shared with appropriate members of staff, even though this breaches their right to confidentiality/anonymity. In the extremely rare event of such a

disclosure occurring, the researcher would immediately inform the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding officer. This did not happen during this research.

Interviews were kept to a minimum time to reduce the potential for drops in attention and concentration. Any supplementary questions were only utilised when seeking clarification following directly from questionnaire and attitude scale answers.

3.12.7 Debriefing and feedback

All participants were offered aggregated, anonymous feedback about the findings from the study. The PRU, ELP Managers and ELP staff have been offered a copy of the research once completed.

3.13 Summary of the methodology chapter

In this chapter the researcher has described the overall focus and purpose of the research. The use of a mixed methods research design and the researcher's philosophical stance has been discussed. Research instruments, sample recruitment, research process and data collection have been described, along with ethical considerations. In the following chapter the researcher will present an analysis of the findings of this research.

Chapter 4. Results

4.1 Introduction

This piece of research aimed to explore and evaluate the views and perceptions of the YP and staff that accessed the ELP within a KS3-4 PRU. In order to investigate the use of the ELP with YP who are not in mainstream education, a sequential mixed methods research design was employed. An attitude scale (Appendix 9), staff questionnaire (Appendix 11) and semi-structured interviews (Appendix 12) were used within this mixed methods approach. Data from these sources were triangulated in order to develop an understanding of the use of the ELP with YP who are non-mainstream learners.

4.2 Research Questions (RQs)

RQs were proposed in order to address the research aims and purposes:

- 1. What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?**
- 2. How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?**
- 3. What are staff perceptions of the ELP?**
- 4. How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by the staff?**
- 5. How do staff views compare with the views of YP?**
- 6. What can be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners?**

4.3 Research Data Analysis

For this research a mixed methods design was used, which involved the use of inferential and descriptive statistics and thematic analyses. Table 5 provides an overview of the data analysis methods used within this piece of research. The use of multiple research methods, sources, or theories in order to consider the reliability of findings is known as triangulation (Flick, 1991). Through triangulation it is suggested that the quality and credibility of a study is enhanced (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1991) and it was hoped that it would provide a better understanding of the ELP.

Table 5: Data Analysis Methods

<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Research Collection Method</u>	<u>Analysis Method</u>
1. What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?	ELP Statistics: year groups, gender, type of need, hours logged in to ELP over a specified period of time and reading ages. Attitude Scale distributed to all 31 YP who gave consent to participate.	Descriptive statistics (section 4.4.1) Development of attitude scale (section 4.4.2) Overall attitude score (section 4.4.3) Non-parametric tests (section 4.4.4)
2. How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?	Individual semi-structured interviews carried out with eight YP.	Thematic Analysis (section 4.5.2)
3. What are staff perceptions of the ELP?	Questionnaires distributed to all eight members of the ELP staff team.	Descriptive statistics (section 4.6.1.2)
4. How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by staff?	Individual semi-structured interviews carried out with eight staff.	Thematic Analysis (section 4.7.1)
5. How do staff views compare with the views of YP?	A synthesis of data collected from the RQs above	Triangulation Integrated thematic map Interpreted in Discussion chapter, section 5.7
6. What can be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners?	A synthesis of data collected from the RQs above	Triangulation Interpreted in Discussion chapter, section 5.8

For the purposes of this thesis, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 19 was used for analysis of data.

4.4 RQ 1 What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?

4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics are a way of representing an important aspect of a set of data with a single number (Robson, 2011). At the time of data collection there

were approximately forty five YP accessing the ELP; of these 31 consented to take part in the study.

Table 6: Overview table of descriptive information of YP (n=31)

	Number of YP	% of the total
Gender	9 female	29%
	22 male	71%
Year group	3 Y9	10%
	15 Y10	48%
	13 Y11	42%
Type of need	12 MN	39%
	19 SEBD	61%
Reading ages below chronological age:		
1 year or less	5	16%
1-2 years	5	16%
2 -3 years	7	23%
3-4 years	4	13%
4+ years	10	32%
Logged on for over 50 hours	16	52%

From the overview table it can be seen that a high number of YP were male; over half the YP were classed as having SEBD; 52% of YP had accessed the ELP for more than 50 hours; and only five YP had a reading age that was within one year of their chronological age.

Table 7 below presents the range and mean of the chronological and reading ages of the YP in the study. This highlights a large difference between reading

ages and actual ages of the YP, which will be discussed further in the discussion chapter.

Table 7: Range and mean of chronological and reading ages of the YP (n=31)

YP	Ranged from	Range	Mean
Chronological age	13 years 9 months- 19 years 8 months	5 years 9 months	15 years 2 months
Reading age	7 years 8 months- 15+years	7 years 2 months	12 years 6 months

The 31 YP had the option to complete the attitude scale online or on paper. 18 YP used the paper version and 13 completed the scale online. The different options were described in section 3.8.2 and reasons for the selections varied from personal preference, not having access to a computer or being online and time constraints, these are discussed further in section 5.9.2.3.

4.4.2 Development of attitude scale

In order to answer this RQ an attitude scale was developed for use with this population of YP. See methodology chapter 3.8.2 for a description of the development of this tool.

Appendix 14 shows a table which reports the median and mode of the YP's scores of the 26 attitude scale items remaining after the item analysis was conducted. The raw data is presented including the ten items that were negatively phrased within the attitude scale. Scores for each of the attitude scale items were recorded using the key: Strongly agree = 1, Agree= 2, Neither = 3, Disagree = 4 and Strongly disagree = 5.

The Table in appendix 14 also displays the frequency of response and the percentage of respondents returning that response. This was to make that data easier to compare in terms of assessing levels of agreement to each statement. The table has been split in to the five sub-areas; Behavioural Engagement (BE), Technology Confidence (TC), Affective Engagement (AE), Attitude to learning with computers/the ELP (ALC) and Social Interaction (SI).

Appendix 14 shows that for 13 of the 26 attitude scale items the median was 2. This was that the central value for these items was 'agree' and so more positive attitudes were presented. Four items had a median of 3 'neither', implying a more neutral attitude. The items where the median was 4 'disagree' were the negatively phrased items and these were reversed in the analysis stage.

The mode, being the most commonly occurring category was also 2 'agree' for 15 of the items on the attitude scale, four items had a mode of 3 'neither'. Item 10 had a split mode of 1 and 2, whilst item 30 had a split mode of 2 and 3. Six items provided a mode of 4 and 5 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree', again these were items that were negatively phrased.

The behavioural engagement area shows that only a few YP disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the items. Technology confidence and attitude to learning with computers presents more positive attitudes as most of the item responses were within strongly agree and agree. The areas of affective engagement and social interaction presented more overall neutral responses.

It was important to note that items 1, 6, 8, 11, 12, 17, 24, 25 and 29 were negative statements and therefore the raw data scores were reversed for the purpose of comparison in the analysis stage. For example, item 11 'I do not

understand ELP'. If rated 5 it was then transposed to 1 for the purposes of analysis because the item was negatively phrased and low scores mean high positive attitude on the scale.

4.4.3 Overall attitude scale results

The number of YP who completed the attitude scale was 31 (n=31). The final total scores were taken from the 26 item attitude scale. The maximum possible highest score could be 130 and the minimum possible lowest score could be 26, with a possible scale median of 78. The higher the YP's total score the more negative their attitude towards the ELP and the lower their score the more positive their attitude. The table below highlights that the highest overall total score was 97 and the lowest overall total score was 27. The table below presents the YP's overall total scores being split into four quartiles attitude bands, however it was important to note that as n=31 the quartile split was not equal and so there may be discrepancies. The 1st and 4th quartiles were considered to clearly distinguish the 25% highest and lowest scoring YP. The median was 61 which lies exactly in the centre and falls within the 2nd quartile. This information is also presented in a box and whisker chart in figure 1.

Table 8: YP's overall total scores split into quartiles for attitude bands

YP	Overall Total Score	Quartile	Attitude band
15	27	1 st	Strongly Positive
8	31	1 st	Strongly Positive
9	40	1 st	Strongly Positive
13	46	1 st	Strongly Positive
21	47	1 st	Strongly Positive

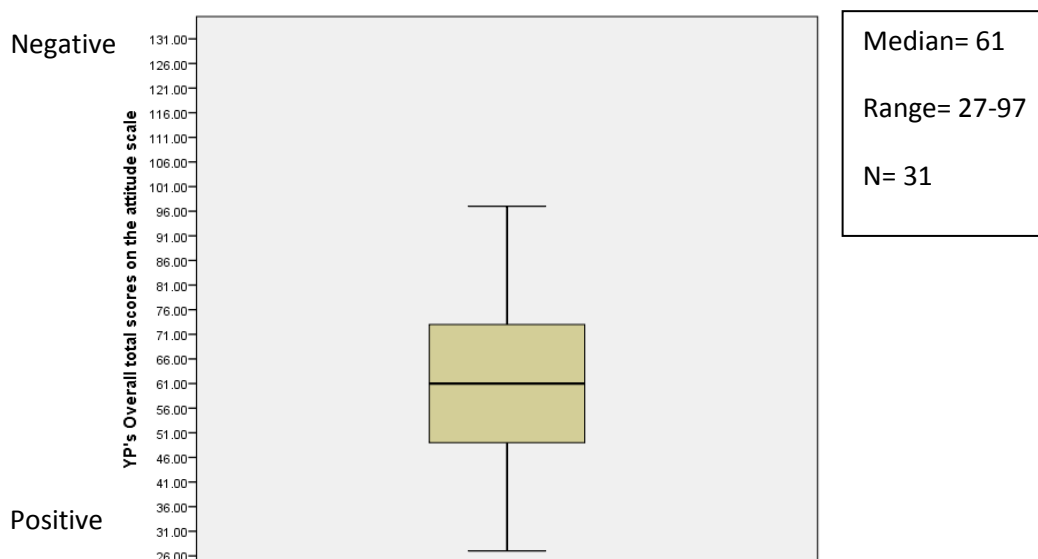
14	48	1 st	Strongly Positive
10	48	1 st	Strongly Positive
18	49	2 nd	Positive
1	49	2 nd	Positive
5	51	2 nd	Positive
23	51	2 nd	Positive
26	55	2 nd	Positive
17	55	2 nd	Positive
7	59	2 nd	Positive
6	60	2 nd	Positive
4	61	2 nd	Positive
19	62	3 rd	Neutral
29	63	3 rd	Neutral
3	64	3 rd	Neutral
22	64	3 rd	Neutral
30	67	3 rd	Neutral
11	69	3 rd	Neutral
27	72	3 rd	Neutral
2	74	3 rd	Neutral
31	75	4 th	Negative
12	75	4 th	Negative
20	79	4 th	Negative
24	84	4 th	Negative
25	92	4 th	Negative
16	95	4 th	Negative
28	97	4 th	Negative

From Figure 1 it was clear to see that the spread of data was shifted towards the lower numerical range of possible overall scores i.e. positive attitude. Figure 1

highlights the total range of 70 with scores from 27-97, whilst the box plot demonstrates the inter-quartile range of scores from the YP, 49-74, demonstrating quite a positive attitude to the ELP. The lowest scoring 25% of YP with a strongly positive attitude to the ELP fall within the whisker of 27-48, whilst the highest scoring 25% of YP perceived to have a negative attitude sit on the whisker of 97-75. The median of the overall possible scores was 78, yet the median of the actual distribution of the YP's overall scores was 61. This suggests that the YP's scores are generally in the lower range and give the impression of more positive attitudes to the ELP.

If the overall median was taken to be the point at which negative or positive attitudes were decided, then five YP (16%) would present with a negative attitude being above the scale median of 78 and 26 (84%) YP would have a positive attitude towards ELP.

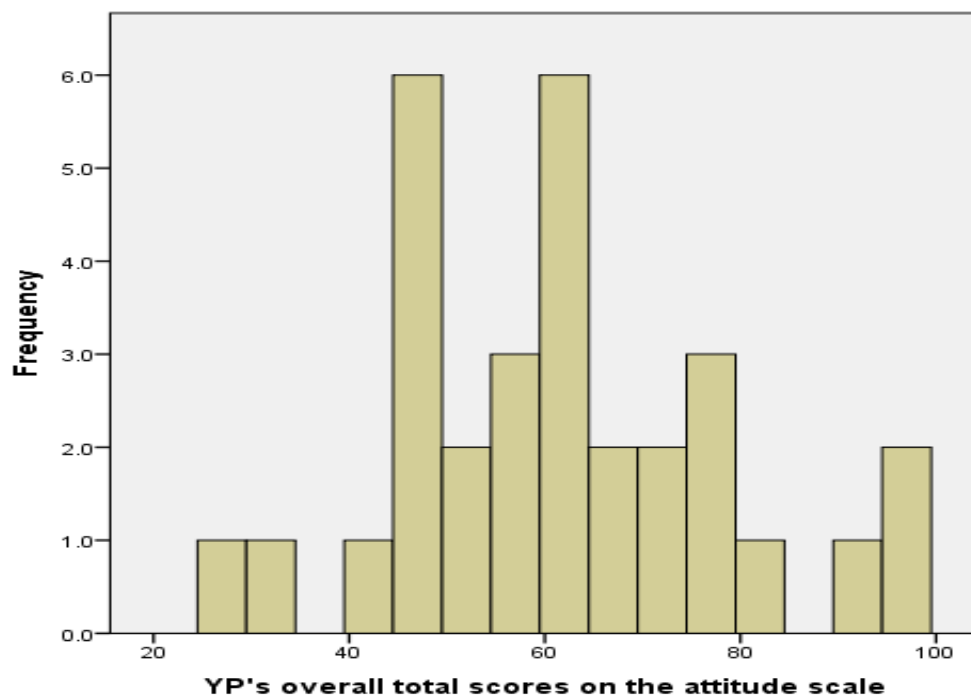
Figure 1: Box and whisker chart for the range of overall total scores from the YP



The histogram (Figure 2) of the same data shows that the distribution was quite uneven: although there was a peak of scores around 48 and 64 (nearer the positive end of the scale), there are fewer scores at the extreme low end and a few more at the highest point of the scale.

Following on from this generalised picture we can better understand what some of these YP were thinking from their interview data in section 4.5.2.1.

Figure 2: Histogram of the overall total scores from the YP (n=31) on the attitude scale



At the end of the attitude scale were two optional open ended questions

'What do you like about using ELP?' and

'Are there any problems or anything you would change about ELP?'

And a ten point scaling question,

‘How happy are you using ELP?’

All 31 YP answered the scaling question, answers ranged from 1 (not very happy) to 10 (very happy). Only four YP provided any problems with the ELP. 24 YP provided answers explaining what they liked about using the ELP. These data are interpreted and integrated in the next chapter.

4.4.4 Non-parametric tests

The attitude scale data is explored further directed by some sub-questions. Assumptions were not met for the parametric analysis; the ordinal data was skewed with small and unequal sample sizes; the data were drawn from an uneven distribution. Therefore non parametric tests, Mann Whitney U test and Spearman’s Correlations were used to explore the data.

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare differences between two independent groups when the dependent variable was either ordinal or continuous, but not normally distributed. A Spearman's Rho test was used to explore correlations within the ordinal data sets.

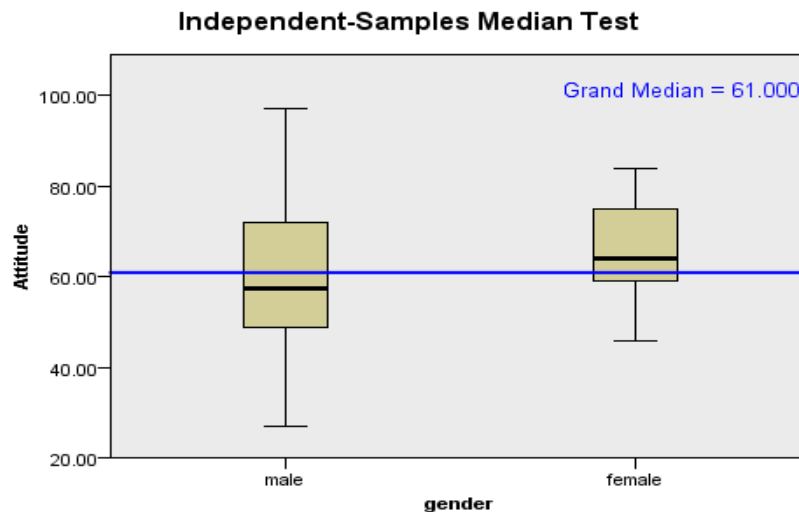
4.4.4.1 Gender

Do males and females have significantly different attitudes to the ELP?

An exploratory analysis was carried out on the attitude scale scores and gender categories, using the Mann-Whitney test. Attitude scale scores for males (Median= 57.5) did not significantly differ from females (Median= 64), therefore the distribution of attitude was not significantly different across both males and females, $U=118.5$, $z=0.85$, $p=0.40$, $r=0.15$.

The median for the overall sample was 61 and figure 3 below shows that the males' median score, 57.5, falls below this whilst the females' median score, 64, is above.

Figure 3: Box and whisker chart for median overall score for gender



The non-significant Mann Whitney suggests there was no significant difference between male and female overall total scores. The range was clearly larger for males but this could be influenced by a larger sample number, 22, compared to nine females. However, the spread of data seen above suggests that males have a larger range of opinions compared to females, male range 27-97 (70), female range 46-84 (38).

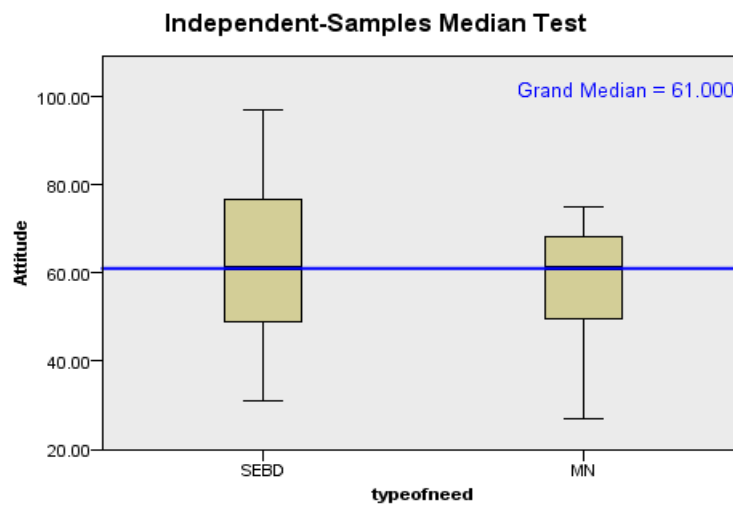
4.4.4.2 Type of need

Do YP with MN and YP with SEBD needs have significantly different attitudes to the ELP?

On average, YP with SEBD needs (n=19) appear to have a higher overall total score on the attitude scale compared to YP with MN (n=12) and therefore a

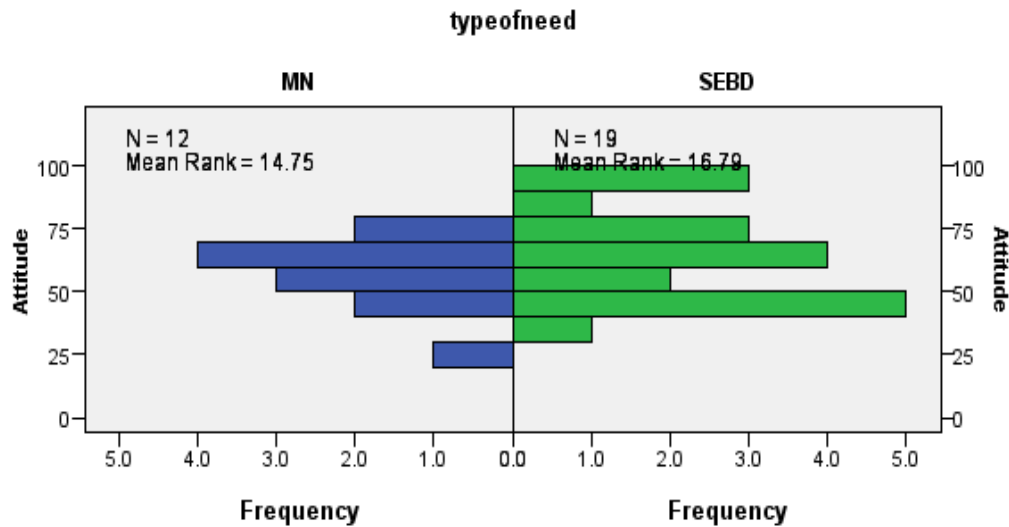
more negative attitude to the ELP, see figure 4 below. This impression comes from the spread of data but was not statistically significant. The total range for YP with SEBD needs, 31-97 (66) and the interquartile range was larger compared to MN where there was a smaller total range, 27- 75 (48) with proportionately more YP in the lower end, meaning a more positive attitude to the ELP.

Figure 4: Box and whisker chart for median overall scores and type of need



Comparison of type of need, MN or SEBD using the Mann-Whitney U test revealed no significant difference. Attitude scale scores for YP with MN did not significantly differ from YP with SEBD needs, $U=99$, $z=-0.61$, $p=0.60$, $r=-0.11$. Although the range of opinions can be seen to be different across the two groups where there was more diversity within SEBD than MN, see Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: The frequency of scores bar graph for MN and SEBD needs and attitude score



4.4.4.3 Year groups

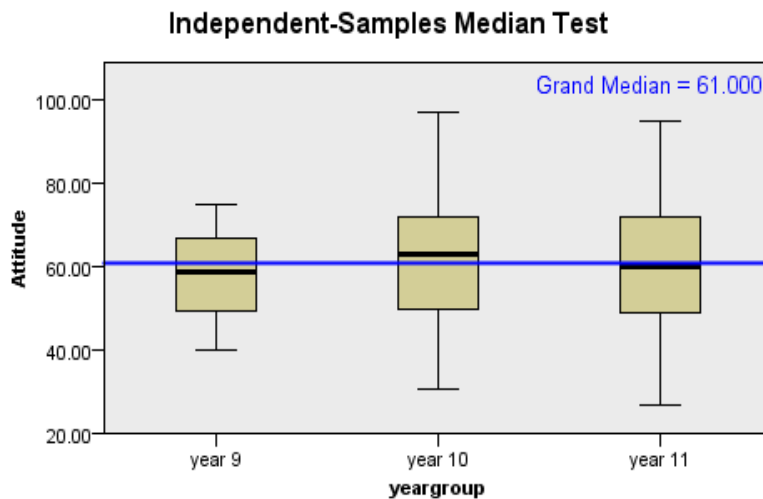
Do YP in different year groups have different attitudes to the ELP?

The spread of data seen in the chart below (figure 6) presents the impression that YP in year 9 (n=3) and year 11 (n=13) appear to have a slightly more positive attitude to the ELP compared to YP in year 10 (n=15). The median for the overall total scores was 61 and figure 6 below shows that there was no real difference visible between the year groups but the range of opinions are varied. Year 9 (Median= 59) and year 11 (Median= 60) median scores fall below the overall median of 61 whilst the year 10 (Median score= 63) was slightly above. This impression comes from the spread of data and was not statistically significant.

As there are three categories the Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance was used and revealed no significance between the attitude scale scores and the YP's year group, $H(2)=0.30$, $p=0.90$.

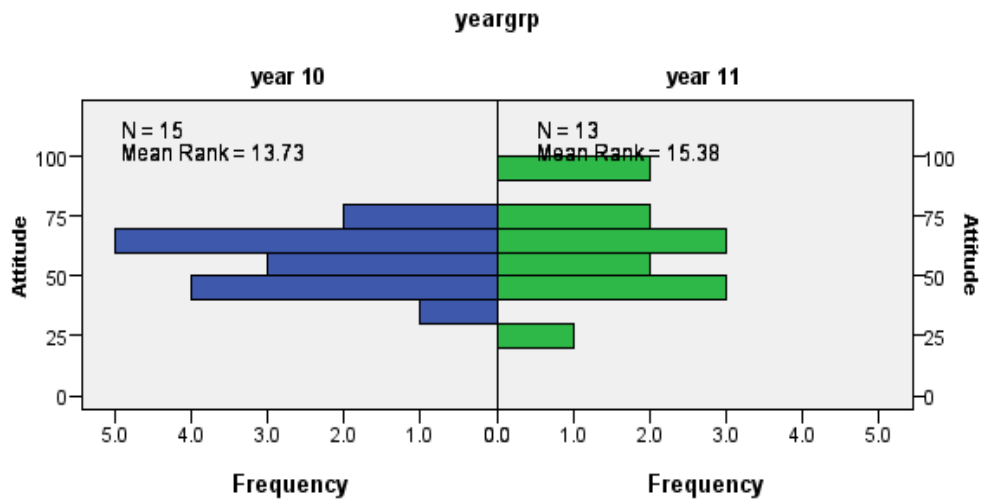
The range for year 9, 40-75 (35) was evidently smaller compared to the ranges for year 10, 31-97 (66) and year 11, 27-95 (68).

Figure 6: Box and whisker chart for median overall scores and year groups



As there were only three YP in year 9 it seemed acceptable to remove them from this part of the exploratory results in order to try and present a clearer and more equal data set. It was decided to remove these data and carry out a comparison of year 10 and year 11 YP using a Mann-Whitney U test. No significant difference was found. Attitude scale scores for YP in year 10 (n=15, Median= 63) did not significantly differ from YP in year 11 (n=13, Median = 60) therefore the distribution of attitude was similar across both year groups, U=109, z=0.53, p=0.62, r=0.1. Figure 7 below presents a wider range of opinions within the group of year 11 YP when compared to the opinions of the year 10 YP.

Figure 7: The frequency of scores bar chart for year 10 and year 11 YP and attitude score



4.4.4.4 Reading age

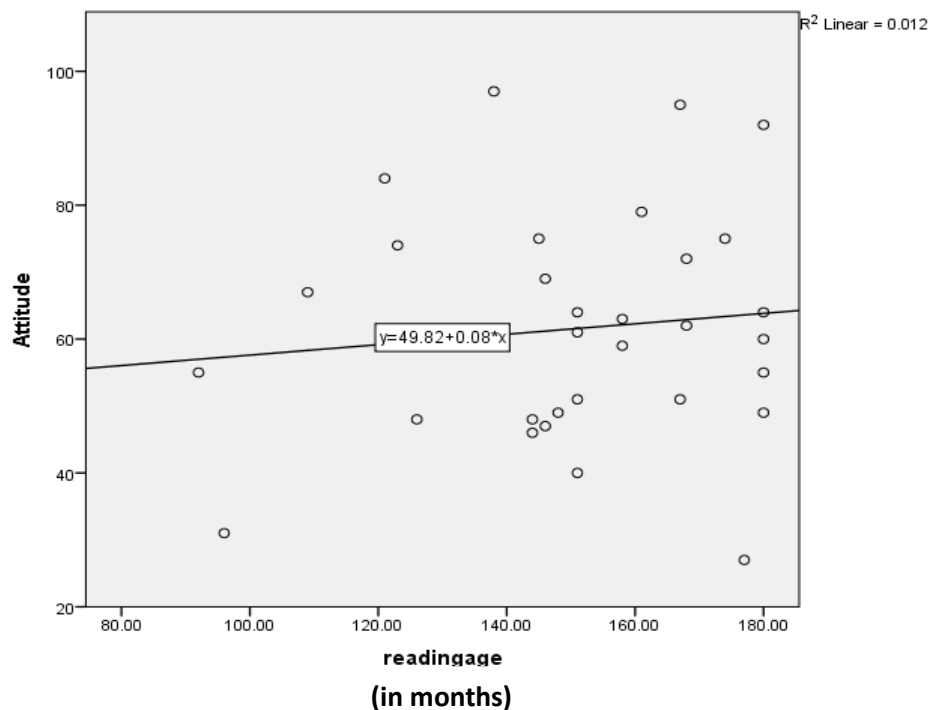
Is the baseline reading age of the YP associated with their attitudes to the ELP?

The purpose of exploring the YP’s attitude score and their baseline reading age was to see whether reading predicted attitude score. The reading ages ranged from 7 years 8 months to 15 years+, with a range of 7 years 3 months and a mean of 12 years 6 months.

Reading age was not significantly related to the YP’s (n=31) overall total scores, $r_s = .09$, 95%BCa CI [-.32, .45], $p = .65$. Figure 8 shows a simple scatterplot exploring the relationship between the attitude of the YP and their baseline reading age. The scatterplot presents a regression line and shows that there was no clear direction of relationship between the YP’s reading age and their attitude. The scatterplot does show that most YP had a reading age above 11 years 6 months; there are only a few cases that have reading ages below

11years 6 months. There are a few outliers for low reading age and a low attitude score but no observed cases of low reading age and high attitude score, implying YP with a lower reading age did not show a negative attitude to the ELP.

Figure 8: Scatterplot of YP’s baseline reading age and their attitude



4.4.4.5 Time logged on

Is the amount of time the YP spent on the ELP correlated with the YP’s attitudes to the ELP?

Once again, for these data the purpose was to explore the YP’s attitude score and the amount of time they had spent logged on since they had started using the ELP. However, it was not possible to collect all the YPs logged on hours from the time they started the ELP due to the variance in start dates for each YP, therefore these figures may be seen as inaccurate and this will be discussed further in chapter five.

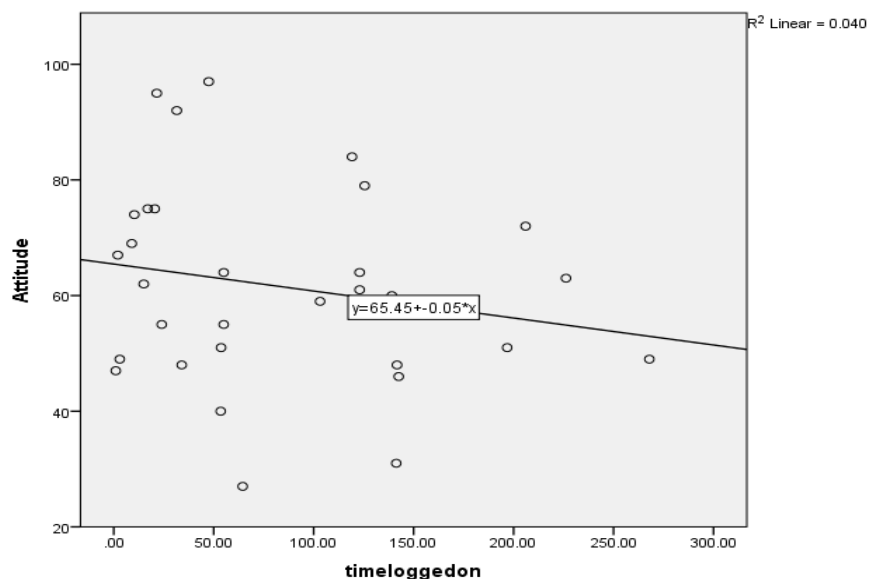
Table 9: Descriptive statistics for hours logged on by the YP

	Time logged on (hours)
Mean	83
Median	55
Range	1-267.9
Total Range	266.9

Spearman's Correlation showed time logged on was not significantly related to the YP's (n=31) overall total scores, $r_s = -.23$, 95%BCa CI [-.53, .16], $p = .21$.

Figure 9 shows a simple scatterplot exploring the relationship between the attitude of the YP and the amount of time they spent logged on to the ELP. It seems that most YP logged on for less than 150 hours over the period of September 2013- June 2014, depending upon when the YP started the ELP. The regression line suggests that the more hours the YP logged on the lower their attitude score and a positive attitude to the ELP.

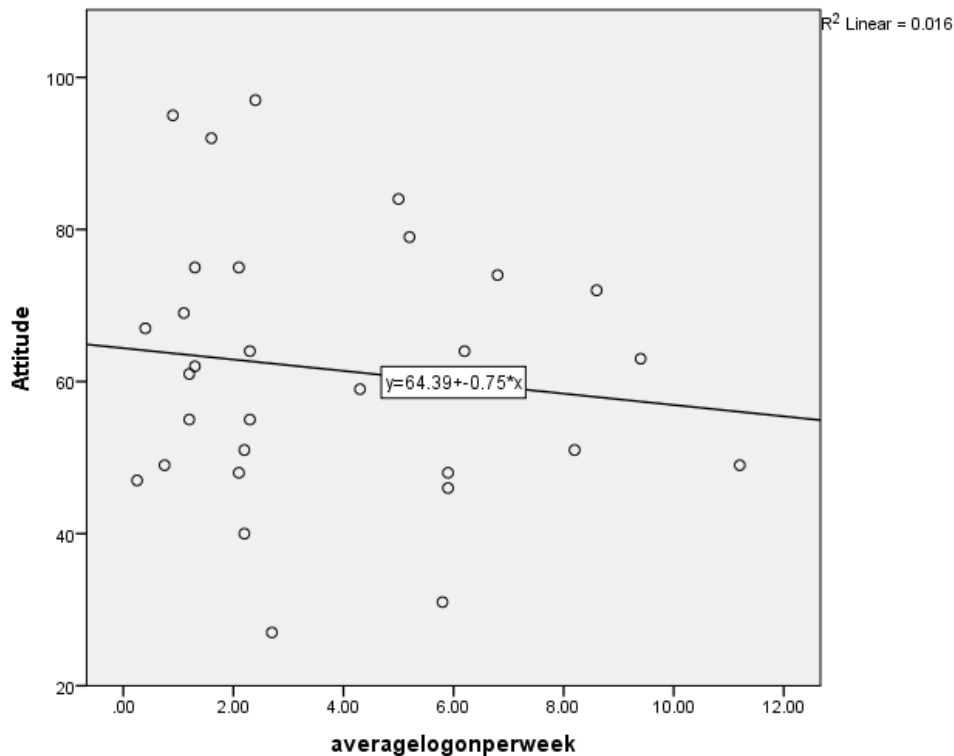
Figure 9: Scatterplot of time YP logged on and their attitude



The researcher took the total hours logged on for the YP and calculated an average per week using the YPs start dates on the ELP. These figures can be seen in section 3.6, table 1.

Spearman's Correlation showed the average time logged on per week was not significantly related to the YP's (n=31) overall total scores, $r_s = -.1$, 95%BCa CI [-.4, .2], $p = .58$. Figure 10 shows a simple scatterplot exploring the relationship between the attitude of the YP and the calculated average amount of time they spent logged on to the ELP per week. The regression line suggests that the more hours the YP logged on per week the lower their attitude score and a positive attitude to the ELP.

Figure 10: Scatterplot of calculated average time YP logged on per week and their attitude



4.4.4.6 Happiness

Is the YP's happiness to use ELP associated with their attitudes?

The question 'How happy are you using ELP?' was answered by all 31 YP. The happiness ratings ranged from 1 (not very happy) to 10 (very happy), with the full range of 10. The mean rating was 6 and the median 5.

Happiness rating was found to be significantly related to the YP's (n=31) overall total scores, $r_s = -.88$, 95%BCa CI $[-.95, -.73]$, $p = .00$.

Figure 11: Scatterplot of YP's happiness rating using ELP and their attitude

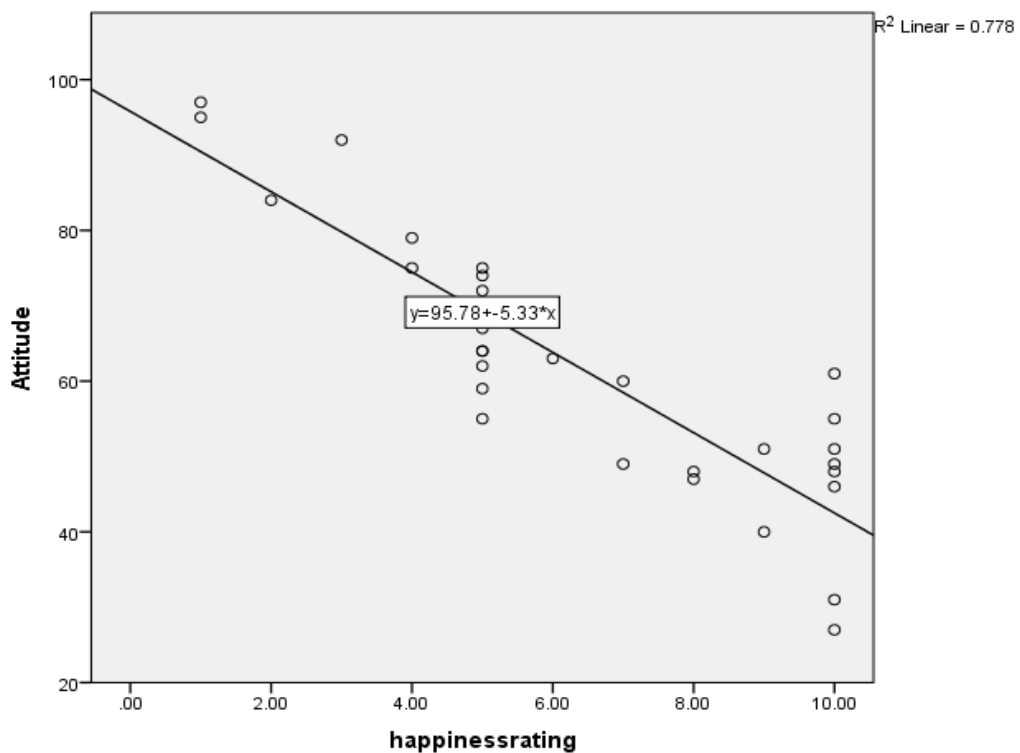


Figure 11 shows a simple scatterplot exploring the relationship between the attitude of the YP and their happiness rating. The scatterplot presents a regression line and shows that there was a clear negative relationship between the YP's happiness rating and their attitude which can be interpreted as the higher the YP's overall score (negative attitude) the lower their happiness

ratings and the lower their attitude scores (positive attitude) the higher their happiness ratings. There are no noticeable outliers in that most points seem to fall within the area of other points.

4.4.5 Summary of RQ 1

Overall the findings collected from the attitude scale present the impression that the YP have quite positive attitudes to the ELP, 84% YP scored lower than the scale median score of 78 and only 5 YP scored higher. No YP scored higher than 97, leaving a wide range to the maximum possible score of 130 (most negative attitude), compared to the range of 1 between the lowest possible score of 26 and the actual YP's lowest score of 27 (most positive attitude).

Attitude scores were not found to be significantly affected by sub-groups such as gender, year group, the type of need, reading age and time logged on.

However, the spread of data and the visual charts could suggest differently, for example the regression line in the scatterplot, figure 9, could suggest that the more hours the YP logged on the lower their attitude score and a positive attitude to the ELP.

4.5 RQ 2 How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?

In order to try and answer RQ2 semi-structured interviews were carried out. The purpose of the interviews was also to try and better understand the reasons and motivations for the YP's attitudes; and to create learning points and reflections for the future of the ELP. Of the 31 YP who completed the attitude scale, eight consented to interview. The YP's profiles will be explored further below.

A standard thematic analysis was carried out on the transcripts of the interviews to generate codes, themes and subthemes, which provided the content of the findings. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as one of the main methods for qualitative analysis, which involves the categorising, analysing and recording of themes or patterns within data.

4.5.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is known for being independent of philosophy and was a flexible approach as it was not rooted in any particular epistemological stance and could be used freely to bring meaning to seemingly random information (Aronson, 1994; Boyatzis, 1998). Whilst one of the main advantages was the flexibility, it was also felt that guidelines for analysis would offer a level of structure to the process. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested six phases of thematic analysis (Appendix 15) which the researcher used to guide the analysis process. Despite the process being seen as a staged approach it was important to note that the analysis was reflective and required moving back and forth between the phases.

Braun and Clarke (2006) believed that researchers must consider the specific thematic approach they will be using prior to undertaking the analysis. They suggest that themes can be obtained by using two different methods: an inductive method or deductive method. An inductive thematic analysis was chosen for this study. Inductive coding means that themes emerge directly from the data as opposed to being driven from the researcher's theoretical framework and any pre-existing codes or ideas. It was suggested that theory driven data can provide a rich picture of parts of the data but it can also lack detail of the

overall data. Equally as there was a lack of literature within this topic area, an inductive approach was considered an appropriate method for the present research.

4.5.2 YP Interview Results

In line with the reasoning behind the interviews the qualitative data was interrogated for frequently occurring themes. The term 'frequently occurring' was chosen because at this stage of the analysis the researcher was interested in exploring the most frequently occurring themes common to the YP and staff.

Of the 31 YP who completed the attitude scale, eight consented to take part in a semi-structured interview. Table 10 presents the themes and Table 11 shows the profile of the eight YP who were interviewed. Appendix 16 shows an example of a coded transcript that was developed by the researcher for the thematic analysis.

Table 10: Themes from YP Interviews in decreasing order of occurrence

Frequency	Transcripts in which it occurred	Theme	Sub-Theme	Code
30	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Communicating with people	Communication online, to whom	Tutors, friends, students, chat
25	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Supporting my learning	Help, type of	Tutor, home, self-motivation
19	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Types of rewards	Effort, type of	Certificates, vouchers, saying 'well done'
17	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8	How I feel about the work	Work, level of ease	Easy, difficult, interesting, doesn't bore me, hate, delete
16	2, 3, 5, 6	I feel on my own	Isolation, lonely	Being on own, no one to talk to
14	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8	Being distracted whilst using the ELP	Level of distraction,	Home, phone
10	2, 4, 5	Improvements to the ELP	Improvements, change of the ELP	Removal of blockages, brighter, more subjects, better rewards
9	1, 3, 5, 7, 8	Being able to concentrate	Sometimes, focussed	On work, no one in the room, on a computer
9	1, 6, 7, 8	There is an element of social interaction	Friends, having some	Talk, work
7	1, 5, 6, 7	Technology helps me to learn	Technology, use of	Helps with learning, easier than writing,
5	1, 2, 3, 7	Frequency of rewards	Effort, frequency	Not many
4	1, 3, 7, 8	No improvements to the ELP	Improvements, none needed	No

Table 11 shows that of the eight YP interviewed, five were male and three female; 87.5% were in Year 10 (7 YP) and one YP was in Year 9 meaning that no Y11s consented to interview; 25% were classed as having MN, with 75% (6 YP) having SEBD; the age of the YP ranged from 14 years to 16 years 9 months, a range of 2 years 8 months. Interestingly, despite the unplanned selection of the eight YP due to restraints of gaining consent, there was an equal split between the types of attitudes they presented with. Profile samples of the attitudes and interview themes from two YP will be discussed further in the next section.

Table 11: Information about the eight YP who took part in the interviews

YP code (n=31)	Gender	Age (in months)	Year group	Reading Age (in months)	Type of need	Total time logged on the ELP	Total score on attitude scale	Attitude Type	Transcript number
8	M	203	10	96	SEBD	141.3	31	Strongly Positive	7
21	M	183	10	146	SEBD	1	47	Strongly Positive	3
18	M	186	10	148	SEBD	3	49	Positive	4
17	M	188	10	92	SEBD	24	55	Positive	8
OVERALL TOTAL SCORE MEDIAN 61									
22	F	185	10	151	SEBD	55	64	Neutral	1
11	F	183	10	146	Anxiety	9	69	Neutral	5
12	F	169	9	145	Anxiety	20.5	75	Negative	2
25	M	183	10	180+	SEBD	31.5	92	Negative	6

4.5.2.1 Profile samples of YP

In order to represent the perceptions from the differing ends of the attitude scale the YP with the highest attitude scale score and YP with the lowest attitude scale score are discussed below in more detail. For two further profile samples of a YP with a negative attitude see Appendix 17 and the profile of another YP with a positive attitude can be seen in Appendix 18.

4.5.2.1.1 Profile Sample One

This profile is of a year 10 male with SEBD type needs, who had logged on to the ELP for a total of 31.5 hours since starting in February 2014. The YP had a reading age the same as their chronological age and they completed the attitude scale using the paper version. See Appendix 19 for a copy of their interview transcript.

This YP produced the highest attitude score out of all eight YP that were interviewed, 92 out of a possible total of 130. This suggests that this YP has a negative attitude towards the ELP. This YP said the least during their interview and this may have been due to his negative attitude.

When asked about the ELP socially, this YP had mixed perceptions. He spoke about how he could talk to his friends and the teachers when he was online using the chat room, yet he also said that sometimes there are people to talk to and sometimes there was not. He said how he preferred to work in a group and would rather be in a classroom with a teacher, giving the impression that this YP was quite social and values his peers and socialising.

Once again this YP presented different perceptions about his technology confidence and affective engagement. This YP had a neutral attitude in these sub-areas, yet he chose strongly disagree 'I am good at using the ELP' expanding to say that he did not like using it. He was unsure about whether 'Learning on the ELP was difficult', item 17, on the attitude scale he scored 'agree', then saying during the interview it was not difficult, changing to it was straight forward, then to sometimes it was hard and sometimes easy.

Overall this YP presented with a negative attitude towards the ELP, yet some of his data from his interview presented varied feelings. On the happiness rating he scored himself at three, not very happy; only three other YP scored lower. Yet during his interview he said that he felt the ELP had helped him a bit. He had strong feelings about socialising with peers and wanting to be back in a classroom environment, despite not being sure about his future except he did not want to use the ELP.

4.5.2.1.2 Profile Sample Two

This YP was a male, year 10, who completed the attitude scale online, and with the lowest score, 31, out of the eight YP interviewed presents with a positive attitude towards the ELP. He started the ELP in November 2013 and had the most logged on hours out of the eight YP interviewed, 141.3 hours. See Appendix 20 for a copy of the interview transcript.

He was very positive when answering questions based around social interaction on the ELP; he said he could talk to anyone on the ELP and that there was always someone to talk to. He strongly agreed with item 3 'I am able to talk to people on the ELP', expanding his answer in the interview to say 'It's just like

having a talk with people you know, even though you are doing work you can also talk to people and it's a good way of building up your communications skills.' He also went on to talk about the different ways of interacting with his peers and staff using headsets or typing via chat rooms. He shared that he had made friends since using the ELP, but also since he had started attending drop in sessions at the PRU. This may have been due to an increase in his confidence of using the ELP as there were only six other YP out of the 31 who completed the attitude scale who had logged on to the ELP for more hours. The YP was described as having SEBD type needs, however during the interview he spoke about his heightened levels of anxiety when working in classrooms and large groups; he described being at school like 'chaos'.

For the sub-area of behavioural engagement he extended a number of his answers from the attitude scale including item 20 'I concentrate best when I am using the ELP', where he chose 'strongly agree', he shared that he was able to focus when he was learning on the ELP because he worked in a quiet area. He expanded his answer to say this had developed further since he started going to the PRU for sessions; he said it's nice and he felt happy when he got something right but he struggled to describe the feeling any further.

Having a log on time of over 141 hours may have influenced this YPs rating of 'I'm good at using the ELP' item 7, which he rated as 'strongly agree', saying that to begin with he was unsure of using the ELP but since he had spent more time using it his confidence had developed.

This YP had a reading age that was nine years below his chronological age, yet despite this during the interview he shared that he felt that the ELP had helped him to develop his English and history skills.

This YP was found to say the most during their interview and with a positive attitude of ELP this may have been why. He found it easier to do work on the ELP and he 'strongly agreed' with item 15 'The ELP helps me learn better.' This YP shared that he was home schooled for a period of time, re-joined mainstream education and then started the ELP. He spoke about his future and desire to continue with the ELP. He clearly thought positively not only about using the ELP but also about going in to the PRU for sessions. On the attitude scale he rated himself at ten, being very happy to use the ELP; he also typed some additional information when asked what he liked about the ELP replying with 'It helps you out in a lot of ways. There are a variety of things to do'.

4.5.3 Summary of RQ2

From the analysis undertaken, it became apparent that some of the main themes that were common to the eight YP included:

- Communicating with people
- Supporting my learning
- Type of rewards available
- How I feel about the work
- Feelings of isolation
- Being easily distracted

- Improvements to the ELP

4.6 RQ3 What are staff perceptions of the ELP?

4.6.1 Staff questionnaire

The staff questionnaire (Appendix 11) was designed to explore the perceptions of the different aspects of the ELP, such as use of technology, social interaction, learning, as matched with the sub-areas of the attitude scale for the YP. It was made up of 13 questions with a range of different ways to answer; six using a Likert effectiveness rating, four with a 10 point scale, three open ended and offering the opportunity to comment further on each question.

4.6.1.1 Overview

The table below presents an overview of both the frequency of response as well as the percentage of respondents (n=8) returning that response for questions 1-5 where a Likert rating answer was provided. This was to make the data easier to compare in terms of assessing levels of agreement to each statement.

Table 12: Frequency and percentage of rating responses from staff for questions 1-5

Question response	1	2	3	4	5
	Very effective	Effective	Average	Ineffective	Very Ineffective
Question					
1. How effective do you feel ELP is in supporting young people with their learning?	0	8	0	0	0
	0	100%	0	0	0
2. How effective do you feel ELP is helping young people manage their behaviours?	1	5	2	0	0
	12.5%	62.5%	25%	0	0
3. How effective do you feel ELP is in helping young people who cannot attend education settings to access education?	4	3	1	0	0
	50%	37.5%	12.5%	0	0
4. How effective do you feel ELP is in supporting and developing young people's social interaction skills?	0	3	5	0	0
	0	37.5%	62.5%	0	0
5. How effective do you feel ELP is in supporting young people with their engagement and motivation to learn?	0	4	4	0	0
	0	50%	50%	0	0

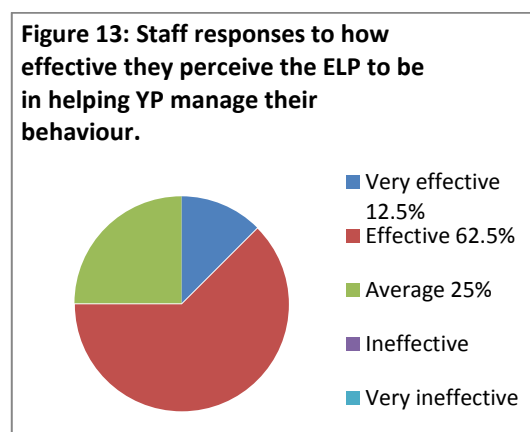
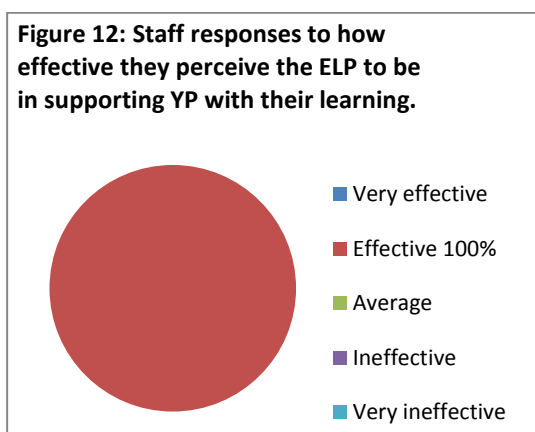
The table shows that no staff responded with 'ineffective' or 'very ineffective' to any of the five questions. This suggests that the eight staff think quite positively

to the use of the ELP with YP. These findings will be discussed further below and in the discussion chapter.

4.6.1.2 Descriptive Statistics

1) How effective do you feel the ELP is in supporting young people with their learning?

Figure 12 below shows that all staff (n=8) perceived the ELP to be effective in supporting YP with their learning. This question showed the most agreement among staff and will be discussed further in the next chapter.



One of the main themes that emerged from the reasons the staff felt the ELP was effective in supporting YP with their learning was the ability to be able to create a personalised learning package for the individual YP. One member of staff wrote '*The YP have personalised learning programmes that meet their individual needs (Staff 5)*' and another wrote '*Individualised learning plans can be created for each individual to meet their differing needs (Staff 4)*'.

2) How effective do you feel the ELP is in helping YP manage their behaviours?

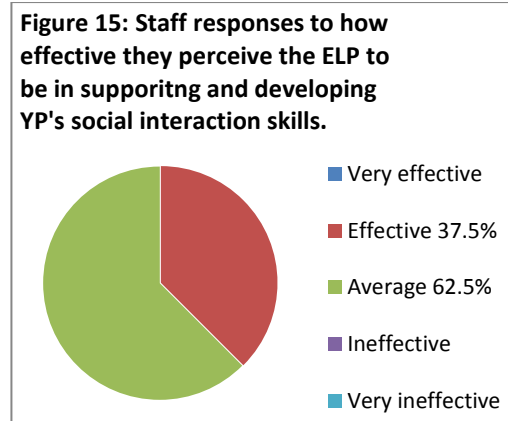
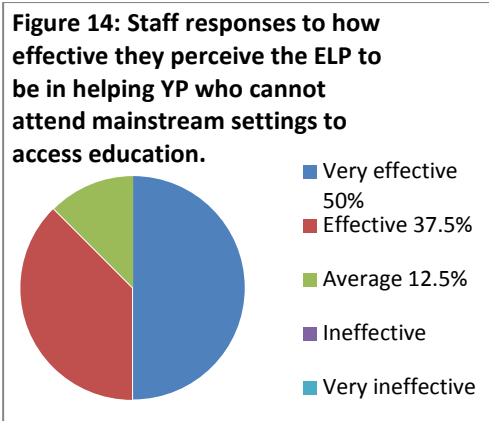
Figure 13 above shows that five members of staff perceived the ELP to be 'effective' in helping YP manage their behaviours. However, it was interesting to note that two members of staff felt that the ELP was 'average' in helping YP manage their behaviours.

The qualitative data from this question highlights that staff felt as the YP mainly learnt in a one to one situation there were limited behaviours to manage.

'Individual one to one sessions prevent any adverse contact with other YP' stated one member of staff (Staff 5). The YP do have access to the centre and some small group activities and some members of staff commented upon this saying that these sessions are *'controlled in terms of YP attending (Staff 5)'*, *'work on managing negative behaviour (Staff 8)'* and *'as a staff we model good behaviour and treat the YP with respect (Staff 1).'*

3) How effective do you feel the ELP is in helping YP who cannot attend education settings to access education?

Four members of staff felt that the ELP was 'very effective' in helping YP who did not attend mainstream settings to access education. Figure 14 below shows that three members of staff perceived the ELP to be 'effective' in helping YP access education.



The theme of the ELP being available continuously to the YP was stated by some of the staff '*the opportunity to access education seven days a week (Staff 3, 4 & 8)*' as one of the reasons for why they felt that the ELP was 'effective' and 'very effective' in helping YP access education. Another theme that emerged was that the ELP offered to provide some type of education to those YP who did not access education '*those who do not attend (mainstream settings), can get a very good education by being on the ELP (Staff 1).*'

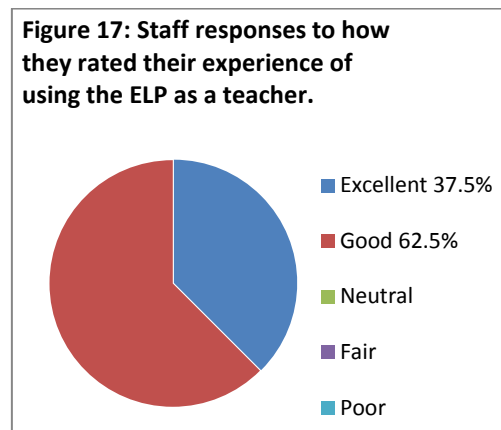
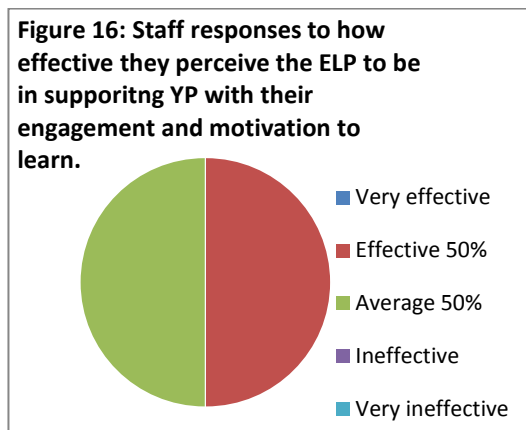
4) How effective do you feel the ELP is in supporting and developing YP's social interaction skills?

Figure 15 above shows that five members of staff perceived the ELP to be 'average' in supporting and developing YP's social interaction skills. Yet, three staff felt that it was 'effective'.

Of the seven members of staff who provided some qualitative data for this question, four of them reported the '*chat facilities*' available for social interaction and five also stated the '*drop in sessions*' helped support and develop their social interaction skills.

5) How effective do you feel the ELP is in supporting YP with their engagement and motivation to learn?

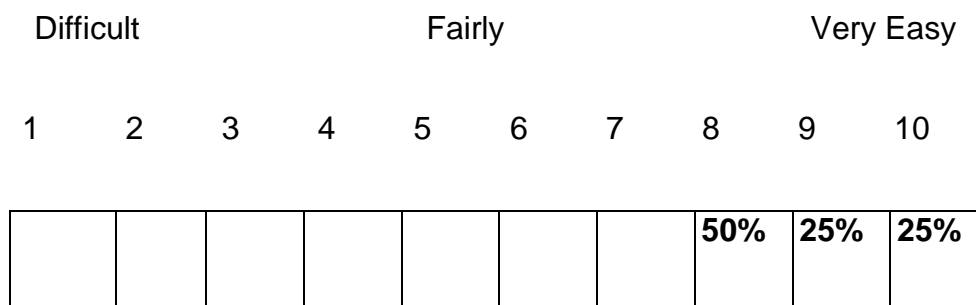
Figure 16 below shows that 50% of staff (n=4) perceived the ELP to be 'average' in supporting YP with engagement and motivation to learn and the other 50% felt that the ELP was 'effective'.



This was one of the questions that produced the most comments from staff. They provided qualitative answers around 'rewards' and the need for rewards in order to help motivate and engage YP with their learning. They also wrote about the 'varied tasks that were available' and how this large choice could help them to learn. Some staff commented upon how the YP were 'encouraged to take ownership of their education...to some degree they can decide what they want to learn (Staff 8)'

6) How easy is it for YP to understand and use the technology of the ELP?

On a scaling question of 1-10 (1= difficult, 10= very easy) four members of staff felt that it was 8. The other 50% of staff felt that it was more towards very easy.

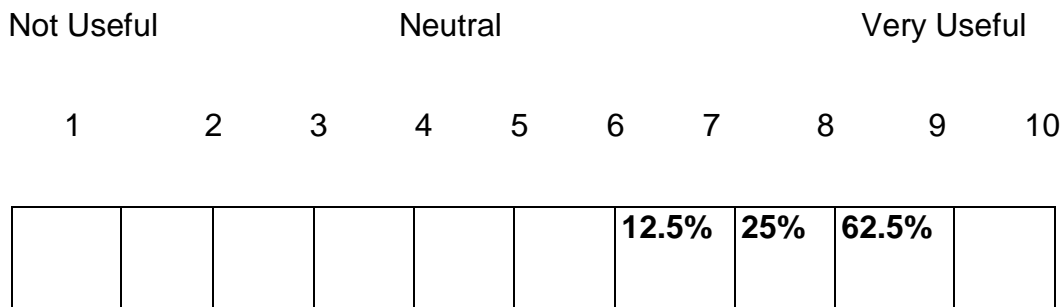


The five members of staff that provided further detail to this question all reported the simplicity of the ELP and the induction process that took place when the YP were first introduced to the ELP.

7) How would you rate your experience of using the ELP as a teacher?

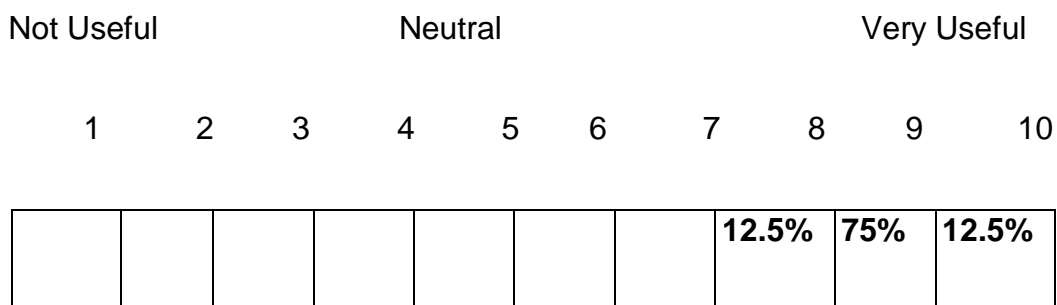
Figure 17 above presented the ratings provided by the staff. Some staff commented upon the number of years they had been involved with the ELP, which implied that the staff were happy and content in their jobs as teachers who use the ELP. Others reported they felt the ELP was able to be used in many ways and could provide personalised learning opportunities to the YP, which some staff felt was '*rewarding*'.

8) How useful have you found the ELP as a means of teaching YP with behaviour difficulties?



The themes staff provided from this question were related to the element of segregation from others ‘*removes the YP from the situation that they couldn't cope with in school (Staff 8)*’ and ‘*YP within a controlled environment with a high staff ratio (Staff 5)*’.

9) How useful have you found the ELP as a means of teaching YP with MN?

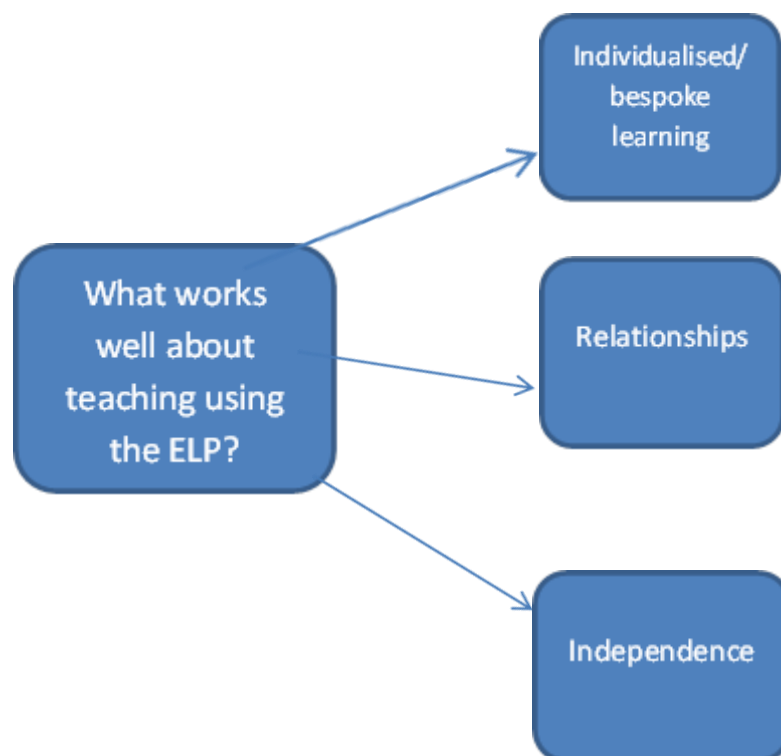


Some staff commented on how they felt the ELP helped YP with MN as it provided them with an opportunity to continue learning if they were too ill to enter the classroom in a mainstream setting. One member of staff stated they felt that YP’s levels of anxieties would be lessened when they accessed the ELP ‘*They feel comfortable working one to one and can concentrate on their education rather than issues bothering them at school (Staff 8)*’.

10) What do you think works well about teaching using the ELP?

Of the eight staff that answered this question, six of them commented on the theme of '*individualised learning*' and some went on to say that the bespoke learning plans that are provided to the YP can help to meet their individual needs. The next most prominent themes from this question were related to '*family*' and '*independence*'. Staff felt that using the ELP allowed them opportunities to form relationships with the YP's families, which helped them to support each other. Comments were also provided about the encouragement towards responsibility of their own learning and how the YP were able to independently choose the topics they wished to learn about. Two staff reported that the use of certificates was a positive thing to mark the YP's achievements.

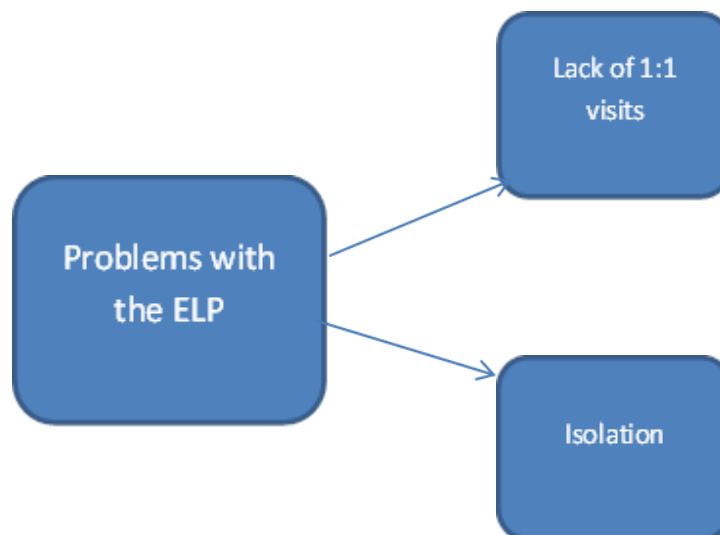
Figure 18: Themes from staff responses to: 'What works well teaching with the ELP?'



11) Do you feel there are any problems with the ELP?

Of the eight staff only one answered 'no' to this question. Seven staff provided answers around themes of '*increasing one to one visits with the YP*', '*the element of isolation for the YP*' and the '*present situation and changes taking place*'. Four staff felt that having only one session of one to one (face to face) time per week with the YP was not enough. Three staff commented on the YP being at home whilst they were learning and how they may '*feel isolated*'.

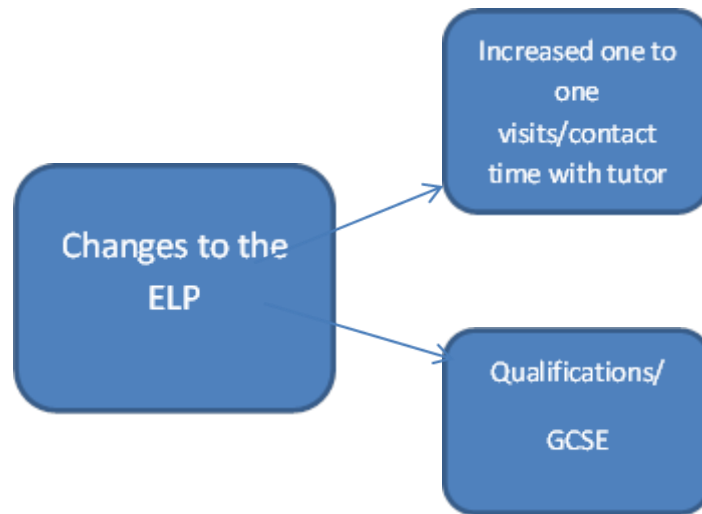
Figure 19: Themes from staff responses to: 'Any problems with the ELP?'



12) Would you make any changes to the ELP?

87.5% of staff said 'yes' they would make changes to the ELP, with only one member of staff replying 'no'. When asked for further details to this question most staff reported the main theme of change to be '*increasing teacher pupil contact time*', *face to face time*. Some staff also felt that providing the YP with access to qualifications was needed in the future.

Figure 20: Themes from staff responses to: ‘Any changes to the ELP?’



13) How likely would you be to recommend the ELP to others?

Not Likely		Neither				Very Likely			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
					12.5%		25%	37.5%	25%

Final comments from staff included themes of ‘*success*’, ‘*support*’, ‘*new starts*’ and ‘*individual needs*’. One member of staff wrote ‘*I would have no qualms about recommending ELP to others. It is an extremely effective educational tool (Staff 1).*’

4.6.2 Summary of RQ3

Overall the findings collected from the staff questionnaire suggested that the staff think quite positively about the use of the ELP with YP. Themes emerged from the qualitative responses around isolation, independence, relationships, lack of qualifications and developments of the ELP.

4.7 RQ4 How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by the staff?

In order to try and answer RQ4 semi-structured interviews were carried out.

The purpose of the interviews was also to try and better understand their perceptions of the ELP; and to create learning points and reflections for the future of the ELP at the PRU.

4.7.1 Thematic Analysis

All eight staff that completed the staff questionnaire also consented to take part in the semi-structured interviews.

Table 13: Themes from Staff Interviews in decreasing order of occurrence

Frequency	Transcripts in which it occurred	Theme	Sub-Theme	Code
22	1, 2, 3, 5	The level of engagement from the YP	Engagement, Motivate	Help, useful, encourage
21	1, 2, 5, 7	The level of support the YP receive	Level of support, Parents, families	Supportive, home
20	5, 6, 7, 8	The use of technology	Access, Technology, confidence	Enjoy, simple
17	2, 4, 6, 7, 8	Working Through a time of change	Changes of the ELP, so much change	Time of transition, difficult
17	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	Communicating with people	Interactions, lack of, negative	Need to be busy, doesn't help
17	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8	Type of YP	Medical, works well	best
16	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	The use of technology	Access, straight forward, simple	Easy to use

14	1, 4, 5, 7, 8	More time with YP is needed	Improvements, More 1:1	Face to face, teacher, home visits
13	1, 2, 4, 7, 8	Type of YP	Behaviour, works well	1:1
13	5, 6, 7, 8	YP's social skills	Level of, relationships	Good, intensity
12	1, 5, 6, 7, 8	Motivation & Behavioural engagement	Type of, rewards	Vouchers, certificates, tangible
11	3, 4, 7	Learning with technology	Access, support	24.7, whole time
11	1, 3, 5, 8	Improvements to the ELP	Learning, assessments, qualifications	Get to know YP, tests, English and maths
10	1, 2, 7, 8	The need to test the YP	Focus, pressure,	Test, GCSE's, exams, qualifications
9	4, 5, 6, 7	Motivation	Self-motivated, autonomy	Independent
8	1, 5, 7	Frequency of rewards	Rewards, lack of	Let down, none
4	1, 2, 4, 5	Communicate with people	Chat rooms, use of	Effective, others
3	2, 4, 8	Feelings of isolation	Isolation, lonely	Home, alone

4.7.2 Summary of RQ4

From the analysis undertaken, it became apparent the themes that were common to the staff included:

- The level of engagement from the YP
- The use of technology for the YP's learning
- The level of support the YP receive from their parents and families

- Working during a time of change
- Communicating with people

4.8 RQ 5 How do staff views compare with the views of YP?

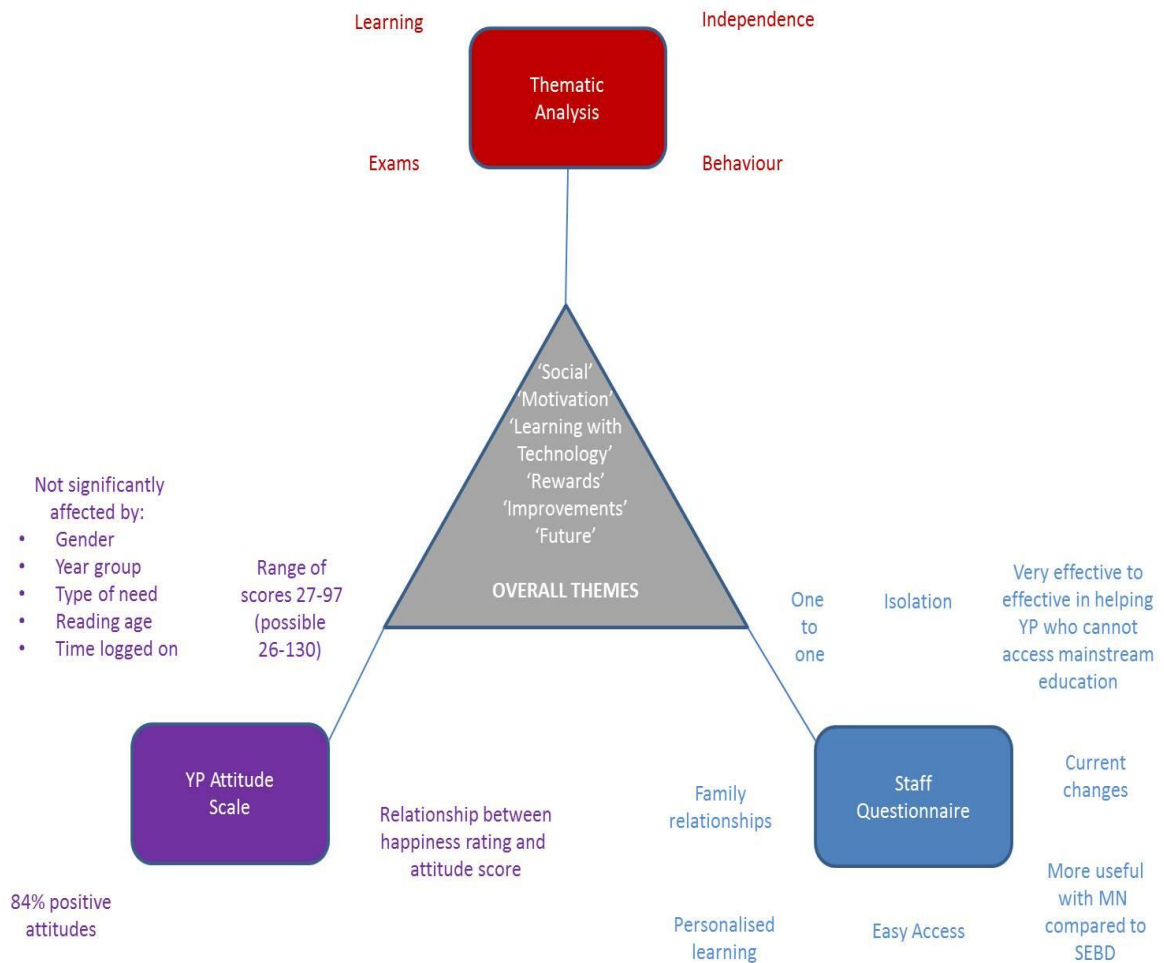
RQ 5 above was addressed through triangulating the data from semi-structured interviews (Appendix 12), staff questionnaire (Appendix 11) and attitude scale (Appendix 9).

The pertinent themes that arose across both the thematic analysis data for both staff and YP include:

- Themes in relation to social contact
- Themes in relation to motivating factors
- Themes in relation to using technology to learn
- Themes in relation to rewards

These themes and the triangulation of data can be seen in Figure 21 which presents an overall integrated thematic map. Figure 21 shows the six overall themes from the triangulated data. It also presents the three types of data collection and further findings and themes that were established from each method. The YP's attitude scale presents an overview of what was described above. An overview of the findings from the staff questionnaire is included in the map and some further themes that were collected from the thematic analysis of staff and YP can be seen in figure 21 below. The overall themes and YP profiles will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Figure 21: Overall Integrated Thematic Map



4.9 Summary of the results chapter

In this chapter the researcher presented the key findings from the attitude scale, staff questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. In the next chapter the researcher will discuss the triangulation of findings, address RQ5 and RQ6 further and their relation to the literature and a contribution to knowledge. The implications of these results for practice and future research are also considered.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by recapping the research aims and questions. The key findings from chapter four will be contextualised and considered in relation to the research questions, literature review and previous research findings. A critique of the methodology used in the study will be discussed and its perceived impact on the research findings. The contribution of this piece of research will be highlighted, alternative explanations considered and limitations acknowledged. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of the potential implications of this research for educational psychology practice, along with recommendations regarding future research.

5.2 Aims and Research Questions

The thesis aimed to explore and evaluate the views and perceptions of YP and staff that accessed a specific ELP within a PRU, asking how staff views compare with the views of YP and what can be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners. It was acknowledged that there was limited research in the area of the use of e-learning with vulnerable YP; specifically exploring and evaluating the views and perceptions of YP and staff around a focus ELP and within a mixed methods research design.

In order to address these research aims, the following RQs were proposed:

- 1. What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?**
- 2. How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?**
- 3. What are staff perceptions of the ELP?**
- 4. How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by the staff?**
- 5. How do staff views compare with the views of YP?**
- 6. What can be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners?**

5.3 RQ1 What attitudes do YP have towards the ELP?

5.3.1 Purpose of RQ1

Some literature suggested that YP's attitudes and participation with technology, computers and ELPs could affect their performance of using and learning with such tools (Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Pierce et al., 2005). Positive attitudes could potentially increase effort and achievement in learning.

RQ1 sought to explore the attitudes YP with SEBD and MN had towards the ELP they were currently accessing and to see if there was any variation amongst the sub-groups of gender, year group, the type of need, reading age and time logged on. The attitudes of the YP were collected (see section 3.8.2 & Appendix 9) using the attitude scale specifically created for the purpose of this study. Becta (2009) valued the attitudes and perceptions of YP and felt that in collecting these data it could affect the development of technology. Similar to

Selwyn (1997) it was hoped that this tool would provide a comprehensive measure of YP's attitudes towards the ELP.

5.3.2 Reported attitudes from YP

Section 4.4.3 highlighted the attitudes of the 31 YP who completed the attitude scale. Findings showed that the highest overall total score was 97 out of a possible maximum score of 130 and the lowest overall total score was 27 compared to a possible minimum score of 26. 26 YP out of 31 presented with a positive attitude towards the ELP, amounting to 84% YP who had an overall total score above the scale median; three quarters of the number of YP who took part.

The attitude scale was created based on five sub-areas (social interaction, affective engagement, technology confidence, behavioural engagement and attitude to learning with computers/the ELP). Items 1, 3, 8 and 27 presented data showing that the sub-area of social interaction had more overall neutral responses from the YP. Within the sub-area of affective engagement there were six items on the attitude scale, these items also provided mostly neutral responses. The sub-area of technology confidence presented more positive attitudes as most of the item responses were within 'strongly agree' and 'agree', this suggested that many of the YP had a level of confidence when using technology. The behavioural engagement area showed that only a few YP disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the items. Behavioural engagement was found in items 4, 6, 9, 20, 28 and 30 on the attitude scale, with the mode for five of the items being 'agree', this implied that many of the YP demonstrated some engagement with the ELP by asking for help, correcting their mistakes

and concentrating. The area of attitude to learning with computers/the ELP presented more positive attitudes as most of the item responses were within 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. These data link with the question at the end of the attitude scale, *'What do you like about using ELP?'* Themes that emerged from the 24 YP who provided answers to this included, *'easy to use'*, *'no school'* and *'helps to learn'*.

The question 'How happy are you using ELP?' was answered by all 31 YP. The answers ranged from 1 (not very happy) to 10 (very happy). The two YP with the highest overall total score on the attitude scale, with a negative attitude, rated themselves as 1, not very happy to use ELP. Yet, there were 12 YP (39%) who rated themselves at 8, 9, and 10, very happy to use ELP. When comparing the YP's overall total scores on the attitude scale with their rating of how happy they were to use ELP, it was clear to see there was an association. In section 4.4.4.6, the happiness rating was found to be significantly related to the YP's overall total scores and this association further validates the attitude scale.

The attitude scores were explored further; see section 4.4.3 and findings showed that the sub-groups such as gender, year group, the type of need, reading age and time logged on were not significantly differentiated by attitude scores and as such the overall findings were common across the groups i.e. no difference between males and females, year groups and SEBD and MN.

5.3.3 Summary of RQ1

Overall, YP presented with more positive attitudes to the ELP, with 84% YP who had an overall total score below the scale median. No significant results were found from comparisons of sub groups and this may have been partly due to the

small sample size. Acknowledgments have been made that these findings should be treated with caution due to the small sample size and the attitudes reflected represent a specific group of vulnerable YP within one focus PRU and this is why the research was presented as a case study.

5.4 RQ2 How are attitudes to the ELP explained by the YP?

5.4.1 Purpose of RQ2

The aim of RQ2 was to try to further understand the attitudes of the YP and this was done through semi-structured interviews (section 4.6.2.2.2 & 4.6.2.3; Appendices 17, 18 & 19). Ito et al's (2008) study carried out a questionnaire, observations and interviews to explore the use of living with new media and they were able to form some clear conclusions from their research. They concluded that the use of digital media allowed a style of learning that was less about consuming knowledge and more about interaction and participation.

5.4.2 Explanations from YP

From the eight interviews the frequently occurring themes were shown in section 4.5.2. The most apparent themes from the YP were in relation to social interaction and the use of communication they have with their friends, peers and tutors. This theme occurred 30 times across the interviews and was found in all eight transcripts. This could suggest that all eight YP felt that social communication was important when using the ELP. These findings add to the literature which suggests that technology can provide opportunities for communications outside of school (Valdez et al., 2000). The least occurring theme found from the eight YP interviews was no improvements to the ELP,

occurring only four times across four transcripts; suggesting that half of the YP interviewed felt that no improvements were needed to the current ELP.

Profile sample one (section 4.5.2.1.1 & Appendix 19) presented with the most negative attitude of all eight YP who were interviewed and he had strong feelings about the lack of social interaction when using the ELP compared to being in a classroom. The data he provided during the interview did not always match with his scores from the attitude scale. On the happiness rating he scored himself at three, not very happy, only three other YP scored lower. Yet during his interview he said that he felt the ELP had helped him a bit. This suggested that allowing the YP to participate in the interviews enabled them to enhance their original data from the attitude scales. The other YP with a negative attitude towards the ELP, profile sample two (section 4.5.2.1.2) also changed her mind during the interview. When she was asked about rewards she recognised that she had scored 'disagree' for getting rewards on the ELP and she then asked to change her answer. Data from profile two proposes that her negative attitude may stem from the sub-areas of technology confidence and attitude to using the ELP because she found the ELP to be boring and she wanted it to be easier to use.

Information from a profile sample (Appendix 18) presented a positive attitude to the ELP, yet his responses were more neutral during the interview. This may have been because he was eager to please when completing the attitude scale as he had only just started learning with the ELP within one month of the research taking place. He may not have been confident in verbalising his perceptions during the interview and this could have influenced his replies. His positive attitude towards the ELP may have come from a helpful induction from

his tutor, he may have been quite an optimistic person or someone who enjoys working with technology, or he could have been enjoying the initial induction period being at home and having all his home comforts. The other positive attitude came from profile sample two (section 4.5.2.1.2 & Appendix 20) who also had the most logged on hours, 141, out of all eight YP who were interviewed and this may have been one of the reasons he was able to develop his answers the most from all the interviews.

5.4.3 Summary of RQ2

The profile samples allowed the YP to enhance their views from those given in the attitude scales. It allowed them to extend, change or develop their answers from the attitude scale and it appears some YP appreciated doing this. Some literature advised that YP's attitudes towards computers could affect their performance of using and learning with them (Ito et al., 2008) but it was important to be aware of the possible social and emotional influences (Pajares, 1992; Pierce et al., 2005; Ruffell et al., 1998).

Overall there was a fit for YP between attitude scale scores, interviews and themes found. Generally there does appear to be a difference between the YP who presented with a more positive attitude compared to the YP with a more negative attitude. Those YP who were interviewed with positive attitudes completed their attitude scale online highlighting their interest and motivation for technology. However, not all the YP appeared to be motivated by technology and the ELP. It also became apparent that social interaction was important to the YP but it was unclear how well the ELP supports and permits this within the current system.

5.5 RQ3 What are staff perceptions of the ELP?

5.5.1 Purpose of RQ3

Answering RQ3 involved the distribution of an online staff questionnaire (Appendix 11 & section 4.5). The purpose of RQ3 was to collect the perceptions of the staff to the ELP.

5.5.2 Reported perceptions from the staff questionnaire

Literature suggests that school staff are generally enthusiastic about the use of technology to support YP's learning (Becta, 2010). Results from this questionnaire also present positive views from the staff about the use of the ELP with YP. It was interesting to note that no staff responded with negative answers to any of the questions. The staff worked specifically within the division of the ELP and this could have influenced their perceptions. As Underwood (2009) found, the more technology was used in school then the more positive the staff's perceptions were. The findings may also have been due to an alliance the staff felt towards the ELP and the ELP manager, especially as five of the staff had worked in the ELP division since it was established in 2006 and the remaining three joined 18 months later in 2008. The staff all rated their experiences of using the ELP to teach as 'excellent' or 'good'.

Findings from the staff questionnaire suggested that there was a slight difference in that staff felt the ELP was more useful when teaching YP with MN compared to YP with SEBD. Reasons staff provided were based around the restrictions the YP with MN were presented with, such as physical access, removal of environmental factors and so the ELP helped them to focus more on

their learning rather than the school environment. These findings contribute to the literature and the work of Forrest et al. (2011), which found YP with MN could be affected by their environment and therefore they may have struggled more with their engagement in learning, something the PRU and ELP manager may need to be mindful of in their future developments.

Ito et al. (2008) found that ELPs were able to develop social norms amongst peers, whilst also providing social constraints to YP. Question four on the staff questionnaire asked the staff 'How effective do you feel the ELP is in supporting and developing YPs social interaction skills?' Over half the staff reported it to be 'average', yet their answers then stated examples of when the YP had the opportunity to interact. No staff clearly reported how the ELP supported or developed the YP's social interaction skills. This is an area that could be developed in future research especially as no clear literature was found to present evidence of any type of impact of ELP upon social interaction skills in YP.

The literature suggests that YP who were engaged and motivated would display more effort and participation towards their educational achievements (Finn, 1989; Connell et al., 1991). When staff in the current study were asked if they felt the ELP was effective in supporting YP with their engagement and motivation, half replied 'average' and the other half 'effective'. A number of staff reported that rewards were needed in order to help motivate YP. These findings suggested that there are ways to develop the ELP to address this area in order to help the YP to be more engaged and motivated in their learning.

5.5.3 Summary of RQ3

A general impression was presented from the staff; they felt that the ELP was 'effective' in supporting YP with their learning. There was unison from the staff as they all answered the same, however this answer was not the most positive option and staff did suggest improvements that could be made to the ELP in the future. The most common reason the staff provided for the effectiveness of the ELP was the use of personalised learning, which was in line with the work of Pirrie et al. (2011) who also found that personalised packages for YP could be of great benefit to the YP's learning.

5.6 RQ4 How are the perceptions of the ELP explained by the staff?

5.6.1 Purpose of RQ4

In order to try and answer RQ4 semi-structured interviews were carried out. The purpose of the interviews was to try and better understand the reasons for the staff's views of the ELP. Appendix 21 presents a staff interview transcript.

5.6.2 Explanations from staff

Section 4.7.1 shows that the most apparent themes from the staff interviews were the level of engagement from the YP, the use of technology for the YP's learning, the level of support received and working during a time of change. The theme of engaging the YP occurred 22 times, with staff commenting upon how helpful and useful they felt the ELP was in helping YP with their learning. However this theme only occurred in four of the staff transcripts, despite appearing 22 times and therefore it seems that only half of the staff felt strongly about how the ELP was a motivating tool to engage and teach vulnerable YP.

The use of technology and the ELP was a theme that occurred twice across the staff interviews, with sub-themes of access with enjoyment and access with simplicity. This theme occurred in all the transcripts except one, therefore implying that the staff felt that the ELP was easy for the YP to use and also to enjoy.

Another of the most apparent themes from the staff interview data was related to social interaction. Occurring 21 times across four transcripts, staff commented upon the level of support the YP received from their family when at home. This theme implied that staff value the support YP received and they saw this as important to helping the YP in developing their learning and skills. However, from the staff interviews the two themes that occurred the least across all the transcripts were also related to social interaction, exploring communicating with people and feelings of isolation. Occurring only three and four times were comments about the use of the chat room and the possibility of the YP becoming isolated and lonely when using the ELP at home. This implies that these themes were of less importance to the staff.

Arising in five out of the eight transcripts was the theme related to working through times of change. These five members of staff wanted to make it clear that they were working during a time of transition when many changes were taking places. It seemed that these staff wanted to highlight the importance of change because they were not comfortable with the changes that were taking place around them. They had worked closely within a small team for over six years and they may not have been at ease with what was happening to their team and the ELP.

It was important to note that not all eight staff offered the same explanations during the interviews. For example in relation to the theme of social interaction, transcript 2, commented upon the effects of the YP possibly becoming lonely and isolated when using the ELP. Whereas other staff made comments about relationships that were formed and the level of intensity from using the ELP. This difference of opinions between the staff may have been due to their personal experiences of working with different YP. This point brings in to question the sub-area of social interaction within the ELP, highlighting the lack of clarity and a possible area of concern for the ELP.

5.6.3 Summary of RQ4

Generally there was some consistency in the explanations that were provided by the staff and these data were able to provide the most occurring themes. Overall the staff interviews generated a more extensive list of 18 themes and this may have been due to a larger amount of interview data that was produced in comparison to the YP.

5.7 RQ5 How do staff views compare with the views of YP?

5.7.1 Purpose of RQ5

The purpose of RQ5 was to integrate the answers and responses the YP and staff presented from their attitude scales, questionnaires and interviews. The findings from Otter et al. (2013) who compared the perceptions of YP (with no SEN) and staff showed that their perceptions differed. They found that YP felt disconnected from the staff and their peers, whilst the staff viewed themselves as important in the success of the ELP.

Below are the sub-headings for each of the pertinent themes that arose across the data collection for both staff and YP. Interestingly, each theme links with the five sub-areas from the YP attitude scale; social interaction, affective engagement, technology confidence, behavioural engagement and attitude to learning with the ELP. The themes also match with some of the questions from the staff questionnaire.

5.7.2 Themes from staff and YP

5.7.2.1 Themes in relation to social interaction

A pertinent theme from both the staff and YP interviews was around social interaction; this was linked to communication, interaction, relationships, friendships and isolation. Responses suggested that YP and staff felt there was an element of social interaction when using the ELP, through the use of chat rooms and also with the one to one tutor time.

This theme corresponds with question four on the staff questionnaire 'How effective do you feel ELP is in supporting and developing YP's social interaction skills?', where staff responded with answers of 'effective' and 'average'. Data from the attitude scale also suggested a more neutral perspective. These findings suggested that staff and YP both felt that the ELP provided limited support with YP's social interaction skills. This differs from the findings of Otter et al. (2013), who found different perceptions of e-learning between YP and staff, with YP feeling more separated from the staff and their peers.

This theme was also used to describe sub-themes of relationships and isolation. One member of staff commented during their interview (2:2), '*... in some ways it*

isolates them. It's effective in the fact that they have the instant chat room they do use it a lot... The big minus to it is they are isolated, stuck in their own homes due to the situations that have got them there in the first place.' (See Appendix 21 for a copy of the staff transcript).

Staff perceived relationships to be of importance when using the ELP and some of the YP also commented upon having friendships (7:70), *'It helps me learn with friends; since I've come here I've made friends...'* This contributes to the work of Boling et al. (2012) who found that one of the things YP liked most about e-learning was the social interactions online and face to face between peers and staff.

However, results from the attitude scale suggest differently. Item 27 'ELP helps me to learn with my friends' only eight YP 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed', eleven 'disagreed' and 12 responded with 'neither'. This suggests that within this theme, isolation was a stronger sub-theme compared to friendships for the YP. Implications from this could be for ELP staff to monitor how the YP feel whilst they are accessing the ELP and support any YP who do share feelings of isolation and loneliness. Increased group time and access to the centre was something that was taking place amongst the current developments and changes and this may impact upon YP who access the ELP in the future.

5.7.2.2 Themes in relation to motivating factors

The review provided by Ofsted (2009) concluded that the use of technology with YP was in most cases motivating and engaging. A second theme that arose across data collected in the current study was related to motivating factors. This theme appeared to have sub-themes of engagement, concentration and

distraction. Four staff commented upon the level of motivation needed to engage the YP (5:18), *'I think it's sometimes quite difficult to engage as much as we would like in terms of the online time, it requires them (YP) to be quite self-motivated in terms of logging on and doing the tasks that have been set for them...So we do struggle to try and get them to engage more and complete more tasks...'* This suggested that staff found it quite difficult to engage the YP at times and was an implication for the future use of the ELP; the ELP and staff need to consider the levels of motivation of the YP accessing the ELP (Ally, 2004) and be able to adapt and adjust to them.

Within the attitude scale, the sub-area of behavioural engagement presented in items 6 and 20 related to concentration and distraction. For each of these items 46% of the YP 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with statements, compared to between 29%-26% who 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'. This suggests that there was quite a split in YP's perceptions of how much they concentrate when they are using the ELP. Once again this presents the implication of the differing individual needs of the YP accessing the ELP and how staff need to be prepared to meet these needs. All eight YP who were interviewed commented upon their levels of distraction and how much they could concentrate when using ELP. The responses varied with some YP saying they were able to concentrate when using ELP (8:52), *'...sometimes I can't concentrate, and sometimes I can.'* Literature suggests that vulnerable YP may present with more difficulties in maintaining concentration and engagement in learning (Bethall et al., 2012), but despite this possible difficulty learning away from the school environment and removing any other distractions may not be the key to developing their motivation to learn. Interestingly, when linking these findings to

data from the staff questionnaire there was also a split, 50% staff felt ELP was 'effective' in supporting YP with their engagement and motivation to learn and 50% responded with 'average'. It was clear that motivating vulnerable YP could prove to be challenging and there is not one solution. Thought around the individual and their needs is important, while consideration of their level of motivation, engagement and interest in technology would help to design their future learning with the ELP.

5.7.2.3 Themes in relation to using technology to learn

One of the most frequently occurring themes amongst the staff interviews was the use of technology for the YP's learning. Many commented upon the access of the ELP (6:6), *'I think it's very simple. It's not a case of trawling through different windows to get where you want to be, it's there in one click usually...I think that's quite user friendly.'* In answer to question six from the questionnaire, 100% of staff rated ELP 8, 9 and 10, very easy to use and understand. This contributed to existing literature about areas needed for successful ELPs (Moore & Kearsley, 1996) and linked to the sub-area of technology confidence from the attitude scale which presented more overall positive attitudes as most of the items responses were within 'strongly agree' and 'agree'. Item 29 supported the simplicity of the ELP programme also linking with the area of technology confidence, 'ELP is not difficult to understand'. Only one YP out of 31 'strongly disagreed' with this item, where the other 30 reported a neutral or positive response. Nearly half the number of YP (n=14) responded to item 11 'I do not understand ELP', with 'strongly disagree', demonstrating a level of confidence in its use (6:32), *'...it's just straight forward....'* Data collected from the ELP about how long the YP had logged on for also links to this theme. If YP

were not confident in using and navigating the ELP then surely they would not spend as much time on it compared to a confident YP.

Triangulated data suggested that the current ELP was perceived to be relatively easy to use; this may be due to the simplicity of the interface of the ELP and the fact that the ELP included all the significant elements needed for an effective ELP (Moore and Kearsley, 1996). However, not all YP felt that it was straightforward and so an implication may be for staff to ensure that a differentiated induction package was provided to all YP with timely checks carried out to see how YP are feeling about accessing the ELP.

5.7.2.4 Themes in relation to rewards

From triangulating the data of the interviews, attitude scale and staff questionnaire a general theme relating to rewards emerged. Within the sub-area of affective engagement from the attitude scale there were six items, these items provided mostly neutral responses. However Item 5 'On ELP you get rewards for your efforts' 71% YP chose 'strongly agree' or 'agree'. This suggested that the YP acknowledged the use of rewards whilst they were using the ELP. Seven YP also commented upon the type of rewards during their interviews.

Data from the staff questionnaire highlighted that only a few staff felt there was no current reward system in place. The qualitative elements of the staff questionnaire may have limited the data they provided as during the interviews more staff commented upon the lack of rewards (1:20), *'I feel let down this year with the rewards. The monthly challenges, rewards have not happened this year. They used to get a £2 voucher when they won a challenge and £2 voucher*

for ten certificates. Some YP viewed the certificate as the reward. An implication from this theme may be to monitor and ensure that some type of reward system was in place for the YP and that it was used regularly and consistently. There is a wealth of research available that supports the use of rewards especially with vulnerable groups of YP.

5.7.3 Summary of RQ5

The themes related to social interaction, motivating factors, using technology to learn and rewards were found common to YP and staff but interpreted differently by each and the triangulated data helped to answer RQ5. Data from the staff questionnaire supported the positive perception of a large number of the YP, with a shared response from all eight staff who felt that the ELP was effective in supporting YP's learning. These findings differed from those from Otter et al. (2013) in that there was more agreement between the staff's perceptions and the YP's views in the present study.

5.8 RQ6 What can be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners?

5.8.1 Purpose of RQ6

In order to try and answer RQ6 the triangulated quantitative and qualitative data was explored. The purpose of triangulating data was also to try to create learning points and reflections for the future of the ELP at the PRU.

5.8.2 Improvements to the ELP

Both the staff and YP's data presented with implications for the future of the ELP and ways in which to improve the ELP. Responses suggested that some

YP and staff felt there were improvements that could be made to the ELP such as improving the rewards, adding more subject options, providing qualifications and increasing one to one time, one YP commented (5:64) '*Maybe add a few more subjects, like what people are more interested in...*' and (5:22) '*Yeah, if there was better rewards than just a certificate where you just put it in a folder and never look at it again*'.

These suggested improvements are in line with the findings of Burgstahler et al. (2004) who looked at computer access for those YP and teachers with SEN at one university. They concluded that in order for e-learning opportunities to be accessible then careful consideration needs to be made during the design of the e-learning environment and also with the support provided during the process.

It was important to note that a number of YP felt that no changes were needed to the ELP. This theme corresponds with a question at the end of the YP's attitude scale 'Are there any problems or anything you would change about ELP?' only six YP reported anything, whilst the remaining 25 answered with 'no'.

Answers to question 12 on the staff questionnaire 'Would you make any changes to ELP?', found 87.5% staff responded 'yes' with the main suggestion of increased tutor time, '*Give young people more one to one time...*'

5.8.3 The Future

The future was discussed in a number of ways by both the YP and staff, linking to areas of improvements to the ELP, the future of the ELP and also personal futures. Many of the YP did not feel that the ELP needed improvements but this could have been a question that was open to for the YP to think about and

answer. The researcher could have considered a multiple choice question to see if the YP selected any improvements from a list provided, although if this question had been presented in such a way this would have assumed that improvements were needed to the ELP and at the start of the study this was not discussed.

During the interviews a number of YP spoke about their own futures and where they hoped they would be. This ranged from going to college to do different courses, to reintegrating back in to school; some wanted to continue using the ELP to help them learn and get qualifications.

A significant theme to staff, occurring 17 times in their interviews was a theme in relation to working during a time of change. Staff comments included (7:8), *'I think this year has been a difficult year because of the changes that have been imposed on us...'* and (7:4) *'...I think what the problem is at the moment is we are going through a change aren't we?'* The researcher was considerate of the transitional times the ELP staff were going through at the time of data collection and this is discussed further within the limitations of the study.

5.8.4 Summary of RQ6

The triangulated data presented a number of points learnt about the ELP and also help to develop the ELP in the future. The main learning points were:

Social interaction- Staff need to ensure they access the feelings of the YP around this. Increasing group time and access to the centre would help to develop the YP's social skills.

Certificates- The ELP manager could explore the options of providing recognised qualifications to the YP who access the ELP and increase the options available to the YP. This would then develop and strengthen their learning and also help to prepare them for the options of accessing further education placements.

Reward system- Ensure a clear reward system is in place, used regularly and consistently and the YP understand how to use and access the rewards.

Induction- Guarantee that all the YP who start the ELP access a differentiated induction package, with timely checks carried out to see how YP are feeling about accessing the ELP.

Individual needs- All staff need to continue to consider the differing individual needs of all the YP who access the ELP. These needs include their levels of motivation, engagement, interest in using computers and the ELP and staff need to have the skills to be able to adapt and adjust accordingly.

5.9 Conclusions

This thesis aimed to explore and evaluate the attitudes and perceptions of YP and staff that accessed a specific ELP within a PRU, asking how these views compared and what could be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners.

5.9.1 Were the aims achieved?

The aims of this thesis were achieved and the researcher was able to present a vast amount of data in relation to the perceptions and attitudes to the ELP through the use of a mixed methods approach. The researcher was able to

conclude that overall YP and staff perceived the ELP to be a generally effective provision for YP who are non-mainstream learners. Suggestions for the future development of the ELP were provided through the interviews, questionnaire and scale used.

There was limited research which explored the attitudes of vulnerable YP and in particular their attitudes in relation to an ELP (Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Pierce et al., 2005). The attitudes of YP with SEBD and MN were explored through the specifically designed attitude scale. Over three quarters of the YP presented positive attitudes to the ELP and it was hoped that these positive attitudes highlight the impact of the ELP. It appears that the scale provided a comprehensive measure of the YP's attitudes (Selwyn, 1997) but there were limitations of the scale which are discussed below. It was hoped that with these data and research the PRU and ELP managers will value the attitudes of the YP and staff and be able to develop the ELP further (Becta, 2009). Section 5.8.4 provided some general suggestions and ways for the ELP to move forward which included improving the reward system, providing certified qualifications and gaining an understanding of the YP's needs.

An online questionnaire was used to collect the perceptions from the staff of the ELP. The findings from the questionnaire present a general overall impression that the ELP was effective in supporting YP with their learning. Suggestions were provided from the staff as to how the ELP could be improved and these will be shared with the managers of the PRU and the ELP. In line with some previous research (Pirrie et al., 2011) was the effectiveness of personalised learning, which were found to be of benefit to YP's learning.

It was generally perceived that the ELP was effective in its use with vulnerable YP, and this was supported with data from the interviews, questionnaire and attitude scale. The themes in relation to social interaction, motivating factors, using technology to learn and rewards were found from the triangulated data and provided points for the future development of the ELP.

5.9.2 Limitations of the presented research

5.9.2.1 Methodological Limitations

The researcher acknowledged that there were a number of limitations to the methodology of the research presented. Using a case study evaluation mixed methods research design, the attitudes and perceptions of YP and staff from one PRU in one LA were gained. However, the researcher acknowledges that there were a number of limitations to the methodology of the research presented.

Consideration of the researcher's role within the specific context was closely considered (Thomson & Gunter, 2011) and the researcher was aware of any influence they may have had during the research. It was possible that due to the nature of the researcher's placement within both the LA and the focus PRU that relationships had been formed with the staff and YP. This could have influenced the participant's decision to consent to the research. Furthermore, the relationships could have influenced any responses given by the participants during the face to face to interviews; answers may have been adjusted to fit the perceived needs of the research and the managers of the ELP and PRU.

Carrying out case study design research within a live system that was constantly developing was something that needed to be carefully considered during the interpretation stage. One of the main influencing factors on the research could have been the changes that were taking place within the systems of the PRU at the time of the data collection. There were major staffing changes with some staff participants leaving their role soon after the data collection. Also the move of the PRU from LA to Academy status could have influenced the context and perceptions of the staff and YP. This research could be viewed as a snapshot in time and conducting this case study research could have highlighted the attention of the ELP, therefore prompting staff to respond in particular ways and leading to subsequent changes in their practice.

5.9.2.2 Limitations of generalizability

The research has highlighted some messages for the PRU and the development of the ELP. However, due to the low number of participants the results from the current research have limited generalizability to the PRU population and the wider e-learning arena.

5.9.2.3 Criticism of the research tools

Both the attitude scale and staff questionnaire were developed specifically for this research and therefore could be criticised for not being reliable and valid instruments. As neither of the tools had been used before the researcher recognised that they may not be faultless but attempts were made to refine the tool as much as possible. The researcher did carry out steps to try and reduce this limitation as far as possible, by conducting pilot studies, discussions with the ELP managers and university supervisor and carrying out an item analysis for

the attitude scale. An association was found between the happiness question and the overall attitude score which raises the confidence in the reliability of the tool.

The staff and YP were given the option of how they wished to complete the questionnaire and scale. All eight staff opted to complete the questionnaire online, whereas 18 YP used the paper version of the scale and 13 completed the scale online. The different options were described in section 3.8.1 and reasons for the selections varied from personal preference, not having access to a computer or being online and time constraints. Ideally the researcher had hoped that all the YP had access to a computer and to the ELP but due to the time of year, exams and end of year preparations this was not possible.

It has been recognised that the attitude scale may not be flawless but it was designed and developed for a heterogeneous group using an ELP, not specifically for YP with SEBD and MN, although this was greatly accounted for whilst developing and piloting the tool.

Garland and Noyes (2008) suggested that attitude scales needed to be examined for their reliability and relevance especially with the developments of technology that are constantly taking place. It was hoped that this scale would be used by the ELP team to collect the attitudes of the YP accessing the ELP in the future. The staff will need to be mindful if they plan to use the tool and they may need to look at the relevance of some of the items to ensure they match with the current state of the ELP.

To address the limitations of the attitude scale, it was important for the researcher to ensure accessibility to the attitude scale (Burgstahler et al., 2004),

hence why data of reading ages was collected, a pilot study took place and vocabulary was kept as simple as possible. However, not all of the 31 YP were met individually and so how much support they needed to access the scale was not known.

Ideally the item analysis would have taken place using a group of YP, and then the scale would have been refined and then used with a different group of participants. In this study the item analysis was carried out after the 31 YP had all completed the attitude scale because the research sample was too small to be able to carry out an item analysis before collecting any raw data for the study. The item factor analysis could also have been conducted on the five sub areas of the attitude scale but once again due to only 31 participants this was not a viable option.

5.9.2.4 Criticism of the Data collected from the ELP

The researcher was aware that some of the data collected from the ELP database was not consistent. The data regarding the amount of time YP spent logged on over a specified period of time could be viewed as inaccurate. It was not possible to collect these data from the time the YP started the ELP. There was variance in the dates the YP started the ELP, ranging from October 2012 to June 2014; this could have potentially influenced the findings in the study. It is important to note that these data do not necessarily mean that the more time the YP were logged on then the more they were engaged with the ELP.

A range of reading ages of 7 years 8 months to 15 years+, were presented to the researcher, highlighting an extremely large range. The data collected concerning the YP's reading age could also be viewed as inconsistent. It was

not made clear to the researcher if all the YP had accessed the same reading assessment and so the findings are not reliable. Also, the YP completed the reading assessment, in order to provide a reading age, at different times across the academic year. This could have influenced the findings as YP whose reading ages were found at the start of the year may have developed their skills and so the data may not be a true reflection of their profiles. However this research did not find any significance between reading age and the YP's attitude to the ELP and also their skills to access the ELP.

5.9.2.5 Criticism of the Research Sample

Due to the researcher's placement no participation selection took place (Ivankova, 2014) and a fixed sample of participants was invited to participate. Initially the researcher had planned to use a more homogeneous group of YP. This could have been achieved by selecting YP with only SEBD type needs but discussions with the PRU manager revealed their request to explore the use of the ELP with YP with MN. Since the number of YP accessing the ELP was so limited it was decided to carry out the research with a heterogeneous group of YP.

The researcher made the decision not to include parents as part of the research sample due to not having a clear understanding of the parents levels of knowledge of the ELP; the challenges of being able to access parents of a vulnerable group of YP; having to create a different tool for them; and making comparisons across three groups of participants may have proved too challenging for this piece of research and the time limits and constraints.

Another limiting factor to the research was that the potential sample was case study bound and could only be as large as the staff and YP accessing the ELP at the time of data collection. It was possible that views of these groups could be quite different to that of other LAs and PRUs due a number of factors, such as differences in the systems, management, resources and funding available.

All eight members of staff took part in the research, a 100% response rate. However, at the time of data collection it was reported that forty five YP were accessing the ELP and of these 31 consented to complete the attitude scale (69% response rate). Of the 31 YP who took part eight agreed to be interviewed, giving a 26% response rate. The response rate for staff was more positive compared to that for YP and this could have been for many reasons which may have included: the group of vulnerable YP who were asked to participate may not have had a vested interest in research, no rewards or incentives were offered to the YP, the research took place towards the end of summer term and so the YP may have had other priorities and the YP were non-mainstream learners, who were perceived to lack motivation and engagement with learning and so asking them to carry out an extra task could have proved to be a challenge. It is worth noting that the researcher did not distinguish between the YP that carried out the attitude scale at home or those that completed in the PRU.

Other reasons that could have potentially affected the findings of the current study included the age, gender, staff position, school excluded from and reason for exclusion. This list of factors was considered by the researcher to have potentially influenced the outcomes, although they were not directly sought for this research. The YPs history of education and previous schooling experience

may have impacted upon how they perceive the ELP and using it as a learning tool.

It was noted that the YP were not so forthcoming with information during the interviews. The researcher had conducted interviews with vulnerable YP before using a more structured interview template. A prompt sheet was used in this study to guide the interviews rather than specific questions because the researcher felt this may have allowed the YP to be more open in their dialogue, yet despite this decision this may have hindered the data collected from the interviews. An interesting point was that despite how the YP scored the item on the attitude scale, in some cases when they were asked about why they had provided that score some were not able to justify their choice and some YP changed their mind during the interview, see section 5.5.2. This validates the use of a mixed methods approach highlighting the unreliability and questioning the authenticity of one data set.

5.9.3 Contribution to knowledge

It was acknowledged that there was limited research in the area of the use of e-learning with vulnerable YP; specifically exploring and evaluating the views and perceptions of YP and staff around a focus ELP and within a mixed methods research design. This study was able to explore the research area and offer an understanding of the perceptions of YP and staff of an ELP within a PRU. It was recognised that it was difficult to generalise the results too widely. However, the study does contribute to knowledge and provides the perception of attitudes of vulnerable YP of an ELP, perceptions of staff in using an ELP with YP and learning points according to the views of staff and YP who are non-mainstream

learners. The implications of this research for the ELP, PRU and the educational psychology practice will be considered before suggestions regarding future research.

5.9.4 Implications for the ELP and PRU

The researcher intends to feedback information to the ELP team and PRU manager through a summary report of the study (Appendix 22). The thesis will be made available to anyone who wishes to read it in full.

From a pragmatic perspective the researcher will share the tools they developed specifically for the research sample used in the study with the PRU and ELP manager and discuss any future use of the tools within the PRU.

The researcher believes that the current research highlights a number of opportunities for PRUs to consider the use of ELPs with vulnerable YP. They were also offered the opportunity of sharing their findings within the wider PRU network, at a regional PRU conference. Further discussions will take place with the PRU manager.

The findings from the current research suggest many positive points about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learners, according to the criteria used within the study; the study did not explore re-integration, progress with learning or college entry. However, as suggested by the staff and YP from the findings in this research, section 5.8.4, the ELP could be developed further through increased one to one time, a more sustainable reward system and offering more subjects on the ELP. Careful consideration of the future design of the ELP, with

respect to engagement, social interaction and technology confidence would help to support the learning of the YP even further (Boling et al., 2012).

The researcher interpreted the findings to suggest implications: further consideration of individual needs (Ally 2004), the value of personalised learning, monitoring the well-being of the YP in relation to feelings of isolation and ease of accessing the ELP, adapting to the levels of motivation and engagement presented from the YP.

There are a range of software developments that can enhance YP's literacy and reading skills and this may be something the PRU and ELP may wish to explore further, although the data from this research does show that the YP report the current ELP to help them with their learning, see section 4.5.2 and 5.7.2.3.

Future developments of the ELP could increase participation, social skills, behaviour management, motivation and engagement in learning (Chavez & Soep, 2005; Ito et al., 2008), possibly developing new ways of thinking for educating YP and allowing YP to develop confidence in their abilities, developing a work ethic that best suits them (Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Ally 2004).

5.9.5 Implications for educational psychology practice.

This research has presented an exploration and evaluation of the use of an ELP with YP who are non-mainstream learners. The findings present perceptions from the staff and YP of generally positive use of the ELP. It acknowledged that the findings were context bound to the specific ELP, focus PRU and one LA. The themes presented highlighted areas of social interaction, motivation and engagement and use of an ELP, which may be of interest to an EP. The

pragmatic element of the current study provides tools, a questionnaire and attitude scale, that could be shared with professionals for them to adapt and potentially use in relation to ELPs when gathering perceptions from school staff and YP.

The findings of this study may be of interest to EPs because their role involves contributing to the support of vulnerable YP. The research contributes to ways that educational professionals can support YP using alternative provisions such as ELPs. It was reported that YP with SEN face many barriers (DfE, 2014a) which make it more difficult for them to achieve their potential and to succeed in education. The educational attainment of YP with SEN was significantly lower than that of non-SEN YP; therefore it was likely that these vulnerable YP may be seen by an EP. Therefore an understanding of ways to respond, effective provisions that may be available to YP, and the strengths and challenges of the approach would be useful for EPs.

Carrying out this research has heightened the researcher's awareness of the responses to educating vulnerable YP and the range of APs provided to them, in particular the use of a specific type of ELP. The researcher has an awareness of the key elements needed for an ELP, which would include personalised learning packages, a sustainable reward system, monitoring YP's individual needs and their levels of motivation, engagement and social interaction skills. Having this knowledge and understanding of the use of technology with YP will allow the researcher to share this with other relevant professionals throughout their professional career as an EP. Furthermore as well as learning around the types of methodologies available, developing their knowledge and creating and developing research tools to be used within the study, it has increased the

researcher's desire to continue developing their research skills in their future practice.

5.9.6 Areas for Future Research

This study was an exploratory evaluation of the use of an ELP with YP who are non-mainstream learners and investigated perceptions of the ELP. Areas for development include extending the research sample to include more YP; consider these perceptions with those of YP and staff in another PRU accessing an ELP, within another LA. It would be interesting to see if perceptions are similar or to what extent they differ and would also increase the generalisability of the findings.

Extending the research to explore the use of ELPs in mainstream education and comparing the findings with non-mainstream settings would contribute to the literature. It would be interesting to explore the use of ELPs within other minority groups, such as other SEN populations, possibly offering support to Laiger (2003) who explored the potential for development of ELPs for minority populations.

As discussed above Ito et al. (2008) found that ELPs were able to develop social norms amongst peers, whilst also providing social constraints to YP. This was an area that could be developed in future research especially as no clear literature was found to present evidence of any type of impact of ELP upon social interaction skills in YP. It was also found to be unclear from the present study as to the implications of social interaction from the ELP.

In order to extend the findings further, exploring the costs of using an ELP and comparing it with costs of other alternative provisions for vulnerable YP would be interesting. A number of PRUs are moving to academy status and to consider what the financial implications may be, the admissions criteria, costs of different placements and the level of suitability for the YP would present for a thought-provoking piece of future research.

The researcher would enjoy the opportunity to be able to do a follow up piece of research after the PRU has settled in its academy status to explore any developments they have made. It would be interesting to carry out a longitudinal study to explore any impact from the ELP linking with GCSEs and functional skills certificates and try to understand if this strengthens the effectiveness of the ELP as perceived by the YP and staff. As it was not possible here, it would provide a further element to the current study and also contribute to the limited literature currently available in this area.

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Chapter 7. Appendices

Appendix 1. Examples of Case Studies provided from the ELP manager

CASE STUDIES Student 1: The names have been changed or removed in the following case studies

BEFORE ELP	
Jack has had social and behavioural problems throughout his education and many agencies have been involved since primary school. Jack's behaviour increasingly became an issue and after the failure of a transferred move.	Attendance 0%
AT THE START OF ELP	
<p>Jack joined ELP in January 2009 as a Year 10 student.</p> <p>Jack was a very pleasant young person, who was very friendly and welcoming to his tutor. His sunny disposition was commented upon by several members of the ELP staff. This was a very different person to the young person whom I read about in many school reports and assessments, which talked about a very angry and difficult student, who was uncooperative and unpredictable.</p> <p>Jack completed work eagerly during 1:1 lessons; though due to his poor levels of literacy and numeracy, Jack found it slightly overwhelming in the amount and levels of work available on ELP. He therefore found it hard to independently access the range of work. This meant that we agreed specific tasks which could be completed during the rest of the week and carefully selected work was sent to Mark during the week.</p>	<p>Attendance: Attendance of lessons was excellent.</p> <p>Engagement: Excellent-logging on every day and completing agreed work.</p> <p>General Attitude: Lacked confidence in his own ability, though his attitude to being on ELP was positive.</p> <p>Relationships: Jack lived in a very busy house, with several siblings having young toddlers and babies themselves, although Jack still seemed to be lonely. Mum seemed to be the main carer with Dad working away a lot. Mum seemed to be a very controlling over Jack.</p>
PROGRESS/ATTITUDE AFTER 3-6 MONTHS	
<p>Jack made good progress with his reading and maths and worked with increasing confidence. Jack also attended ELP live lessons. Jack's attendance was still very good and his relationship with his tutor was a positive one, though Jack was beginning to feel isolated with being at home rather than in mainstream school. He was becoming increasingly withdrawn during the week and his family were finding his behaviour challenging. To help stop Jack becoming increasingly withdrawn socially, Jack started to have a double lesson with another year ten student, during these lessons; they completed art work, cookery and design and technology tasks. Jack was also enrolled on a construction course and attended CAST once a week. Jack was also allowed to access ACE on Fridays and with a designated learning mentor, Jack was</p>	<p>Attendance: Attendance of lessons was excellent.</p> <p>Engagement: Excellent-logging on every day and completing agreed work.</p> <p>General Attitude: Lacked confidence in his own ability. Becoming socially withdrawn.</p> <p>Relationships: The relationship with his tutor was strong and Jack felt he was able to talk about any problems or worries he had.</p>

opened up to many social opportunities.	
PROGRESS/DESTINATION ON LEAVING	
<p>Jack's confidence in himself and his abilities was growing, which was a joy to see. Jack had been awarded over 50 ELP certificates and had completed several AQA units. Jack was considering enrolling for a catering course. Jack was enjoying cooking during 1:1 lessons. The reading of the recipes increased Jack's confidence in his literacy ability, as he was able to independently read, prepare and make dishes by following recipes. Socially, Jack was much more confident and no longer felt isolated. Jack no longer needed to work alongside a learning mentor to access social activities and continued to access the PRU on Fridays, where he had made a good group of friends.</p> <p>Jack is now on a training scheme.</p>	<p>Attendance: Attendance of lessons was excellent.</p> <p>Engagement: Excellent-logged on almost every day and took part in ELP live lessons.</p> <p>General Attitude:</p> <p>Confidence in his own ability was increasing.</p> <p>Relationships: Mum didn't feel Jack could cope with getting a job.</p>

Appendix 2. Scoping Paper provided by ELP manager

Scoping paper for collaborative approach to online learning through ELP



Background

The E-Learning Programme (ELP) in this LA was developed on 2005 and formally adopted in 2006. It is used as an approach to learning for young people who are not in mainstream education and provides a personalised learning platform for individuals, supported by face-to-face tutoring.

ELP provides a successful alternative to alternative education provision and systems such as 'Notschool', currently used by some local authorities. Since 2006 there has been significant interest in ELP from authorities both within and outside the AGMA area. The current collaborative programme of activity across the authorities provides an opportunity to build on the successes at LA and potentially roll out the ELP approach to other authorities.

This paper explores the potential to roll out ELP on a wider footprint, identifies the benefits that may be achieved and suggests how such as approach could be delivered.

What is ELP

ELP provides personalised learning for young people primarily focused on excluded or disaffected individuals who are not in mainstream education. It provides a positive educational experience for approximately 60 year 10 and 11 students across the LA area on an annual basis. Online learning is supported by personal tutors who set work for the young people to complete, either through saved workbooks or through interactive, live sessions.

Learning is backed up by face-to-face sessions with tutors, drop-in sessions and sports and activity days. Tutor visits also provide opportunities for parents and guardians to get involved in the programme. It is this unique mix of online and supportive face-to-face interaction that makes the ELP a success for the young people involved.

Timetables are individualised and programmes of activity range from encouraging re-engagement in education to AQA certification and more recently young people are now starting to enter Foundation Learning Step Up Awards. As the majority of learning is online it can take place at any time of day. Experience has shown that this often takes place outside of normal school hours.

Prior to their involvement in the ELP these young people had experienced negative and potentially antagonistic relationships with adults and school staff. The ELP has delivered a number of measurable achievements in the skills development and behaviour of individuals:

- The 2010/11 assessment by tutors showed 92% of students demonstrating either some or definite improvement in areas such as ICT skills, social skills, literacy, confidence and self-esteem, collaborative working and relationships.
- In 2010/11 there were no incidents of offensive language or verbal bullying either between students or aimed at staff.
- In 2008 all 40 ELP year 11 leavers had destinations secured for extended work placements, employment or college.
- In 2010/11 324 AQA certificates and 3 GCSE's were achieved by the cohort or young people.

The ELP provides a sense of community for those involved, providing a chat room type facility for ELP students, providing support mechanisms and opportunities for students to share their experiences

Additional elements / developments in the ELP

Since its initial implementation the ELP has been developed through the creation of ADEL (Adult E-Learning). This provides a free social and educational online community for parents and guardians of ELP students. In 2010/11, 7 adult students were awarded 14 AQA certificates in Maths and English.

SCOL (School Online) provides a similar interface to the ELP and is designed to be used in a school setting as 'time out' from lessons and access to remote tutors.

Who would benefit from the ELP

The ELP is currently only used within one LA in the North West, but provides a strong building block for potential roll out to other authorities. The ELP approach can be used with a variety of individuals, including those who:

- Are excluded from schools;
- May move around, providing continuity for children in care for example;
- Short-term exclusions;
- Require homework management;
- Are isolated within the school environment and
- Are out of school for medical reasons.

Each learner is provided with a home computer and broadband access for the duration of their time with the ELP. This provides 24hr access to over 10,000 activities including learning tasks, advice and chat rooms within the ELP community.

Joining the ELP

Authorities could join the ELPF (E-Learning Programme Interface) through a bespoke interface for those wanting to join from outside the LA. This would provide authorities with the same access to the system and the contents within it. Individual communities for authorities could be established or these can be an element of integrated with the wider community of learners.

In joining the ELPF authorities would benefit from:

- Infrastructure set up and management, including technical oversight and provision;
- Training in all aspects of the model for teachers / mentors
- Ability to include up to 60 young people on the system (more could be made available if required)
- Ongoing monitoring of the system.

Authorities joining would be responsible for:

- Provision of teaching / mentoring staff (initially this could be provided through supply staff particularly if a pilot phase was required)
- Provision of the hardware (PC's and broadband access) although in many cases this is already available to the young people concerned.

The ELP is accessible 24 hrs a day 7 days a week for 265 days a year including access to the pastoral element of the service. For any authority wishing to join this level of commitment is essential to successful delivery. It is this pastoral / mentoring commitment that sets this approach apart from those provided through other systems.

Costs

Access to the ELPF system can be provided to authorities at a cost of £10 per day per pupil equating to £132,500 per year for access over 265 days to 50 pupils. Authorities would however incur further set up costs for the provision of hardware, internet access and training of staff. On an ongoing basis teaching / mentoring staff would also be required at a cost to the authority. These are outlined below using the existing model as the basis for costings.

Teaching costs – The model already in operation provides teaching staff for approximately 50 pupils on an annual basis. The annual staffing costs at LA for this number of pupils equates to £240k. For those authorities wishing to pilot this type of approach it would be possible to use supply staff in the initial stages and if proven to work, permanent positions could then be recruited to. This would potentially reduce the risk in the early stages. The true cost of teaching provision would be dependent on the level and experience of the teachers recruited in any given authority.

Hardware – Computer access for all ELP pupils is essential. Where pupils do not currently have computer access this is provided for them through provision of personal lap tops. Identifying set up costs for hardware would be dependent on the number of young people involved. To establish a similar size provision to LA (50 young people) and using an average cost of lap top of £500 the initial set up costs would be £25k. However research undertaken by Childwise showed 62.8% of young people already own their own lap top. This would mean the initial set up costs could therefore range from £9.3k to £25k for 50 young people depending on ownership levels.

When young people leave the programme they return the lap tops, which are then recycled to other pupils reducing the ongoing running costs. There is a requirement to replace a certain amount of hardware on an annual basis. This is estimated to cost in the region of £2.5k per year.

Internet Access - Internet connection costs are also provided for by the service. For 50 young people this equates to approximately £12k per year or £240 per pupil. This would be an ongoing cost to the programme.

Advice / Training – This can be provided to any authority wishing to access ELPF at a cost of between £194 and £316 per day dependant on who is providing the support. The amount of training and advice required would be down to the individual authority.

	Initial set up costs	Ongoing annual running costs (50 pupils)
Hardware	£9,300 - £25,000	£2,500
Internet access		£12,000
Access to ELPF		£132,500
Staff training (based on 10 days at the highest level)	£3160	
Teaching costs		£240,000
Total	£12,460 - £28,160	£387,000
Total per pupil	£249 - £563	£7740

Benefits

The benefits for implementing this approach would vary from one authority to the next depending on how they wanted to use this type of approach and their current arrangements for service provision. A true representation of the financial benefits would need to be calculated on an authority by authority basis.

Financial benefits of this approach:

It isn't possible to identify comparisons to other approaches available at the current time as there aren't any similar approaches to compare against. The calculations above identify an ongoing annual cost per pupil of the programme to be in the region of £7,740 (excluding initial set up cost).

Although it isn't a true comparison the most easily available information to make a comparison against is the costs of providing services through Pupil Referral Units. Information available on the Ofsted web site suggests that across the Greater Manchester authorities there are 1059 pupil places within 39 PRU's in the areas. The overall budgets as reported in the Section 52 reports suggests the cost of providing these PRU's was £24.3m in 2010/11 and £27.7m in 2011/12 equating to £23k and £26k per pupil respectively. This is significantly above the £7,740 per pupil cost of the ELP programme. However outcomes for the individuals concerned need to be considered also.

Non-financial benefits;

- Personalised approach for individuals

- Continuity for individuals who may move
- Support outside normal school hours which can also support crisis intervention
- The curriculum covered by ELP can cover any topic area
- All work is assessed providing evidence of skills gained by individuals
- An interactive community with other ELP users through the chat room facility

Timescales

As the ELPF infrastructure already exists, adding authorities to the community is a relatively quick process involving:

- Recruitment of teaching staff / mentors (potential to use supply staff initially to shorten this timeframe or allow for a trial period)
- Training of staff
- Establish the community
- Establishing individual young people on the community
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

It is anticipated this process could be completed within a four to five month timeframe. This would depend on the numbers of young people and the timescales for recruiting teachers / mentors.

Next steps

The LA's Directors of Children's Services are asked to:

- Discuss and agree if there is potential for such an approach to be rolled out across other authorities
- Identify if there authority is interested in undertaking further investigative work to identify the potential benefits to their authority
- Where authorities are interested, nominate a link officer to be involved in further investigative work to identify the benefits (financial and non-financial) to their authority.

Appendix 3. Research Timeline

	<u>Year 2 2013/2014</u>		<u>Year 3 2014/2015</u>	
<u>Date</u>	<u>Write up</u>	<u>Practical</u>	<u>Write up</u>	<u>Practical</u>
Sept				
	Literature review	Explore LA and PSC		Data Analysis
Oct				
	Literature review			
Nov				
	Literature review	Gaining consent for ideas from LA and PSC manager	Draft Methodology DUE	
Dec				
Wk 1	Draft Literature review DUE	Consent gained	Create discussion chapter	
Wk 2				
Wk 3				
Wk 4				
Jan				
Wk 1	Create draft research proposal			
Wk 2				
Wk 3		Meeting with ELP manager		
Wk 4				
Feb				
Wk 1	Draft Research proposal DUE			
Wk 2				
Wk 3		Presentations at University		
Wk 4		Meeting with PSC manager		
March				
Wk 1	Research proposal DUE Ethics app DUE	Meet with ELP team	Draft thesis DUE	
Wk 2		Create questionnaires		
Wk 3				
Wk 4				

April				
Wk 1		Share proposed tools with managers		
Wk 2				
Wk 3				
Wk 4				
May				
Wk 1	Create methodology chapter	Email potential participants	<u>FINAL THESIS DUE</u>	
Wk 2		<u>Data Collection</u>		
Wk 3		Pilot study		
Wk 4		Collect consent		
June		<u>Half term</u>		
Wk 1		Questionnaires & Attitude scales	<u>VIVA</u>	
Wk 2		Questionnaires & Attitude scales		
<u>Wk 3</u>		Interviews		
<u>Wk 4</u>		Interviews		
<u>July</u>				
<u>Wk 1</u>		Interviews	Amendments	
<u>Wk 2</u>		Complete data collection		
<u>Wk 3</u>		<u>Data Analysis</u>		
<u>Wk 4</u>				
<u>Aug</u>				
	Create Results chapter			

Appendix 4. Signed Agreement Form

School consent form



I give permission for Emily Taylor to conduct research and collect information from both pupils and staff, with individual consent at this school.

I have seen and read the information sheets before I made a decision about taking part in the study.

I give permission for Emily to begin the first stage of the study in developing the questions for the pupils asking them about learning using computers. She will pilot the questionnaire with pupils in the PRU before using it with the young people on the ELP.

Further from this a questionnaire will be given to the pupils and staff within the ELP team, investigating what they think of computers and the ELP. The questionnaires are expected to take less than 10 minutes to complete.

An interview with those pupils and staff that are willing would follow on from the questionnaire at a later point. The interview would be a semi-structured interview, with questions requiring further detailed answers from the questionnaire.

Any information collected will of course be kept strictly anonymous at all times.

Finally, please also remember that if you do decide to take part, you are free to change your mind at any point in the study.

School: PRU

Name: Anonymous

Signed: _____

Date: 07.05.14

Appendix 5. Information sheet for Young People

My name is Emily Taylor, I am a student at the University of Sheffield, and I have asked all the young people who access the E-Learning programme (ELP) to take part in a research project that I am carrying out. I would like to collect your views about the ELP and how you think it helps you to learn. This will be done via a short questionnaire and possibly a short interview.



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and decide whether or not you would like to take part. Please feel free to contact me if there are any questions, queries or further information. My contact email is edp12et@sheffield.ac.uk

Who will conduct the research?

The research will be conducted by myself, Emily Taylor, a student at the University of Sheffield.

Proposed Title of the research

An Evaluative Case Study of a the E-Learning Programme within a Pupil Support Centre.

What is the aim of the research?

My main aim is to find out what you and your teachers think of the ELP. I also want to see if you and your teachers think that the ELP helps children with their education.

Where will the research happen?

Within the ELP on your laptop/computer. If you decide to take part in an interview you will have the choice for the interview to be online via skype/chat room or I can come to your home and conduct the interview there.

How long will the research take?

The project will run from March through to July 2014. You will only need to complete 1 questionnaire and 1 interview during this time.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire about the ELP. The questionnaire will take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

You will also be asked if you want to answer some questions in a short interview, about 15 minutes, to provide more detailed answers about the questions you have completed. The interview will be recorded either by audio recorder or a copy of our chat online will be printed off, so that I can analyse the information.

What happens to the data collected?

The data will be analysed by me. I will then write a report based upon what I have found. I hope to publish the findings in a journal article. In all reports the data will be presented anonymously, no names will appear anywhere.

How is confidentiality maintained?

All data will be treated confidentially and will be completely anonymous, no names will appear anywhere. All data will be stored on a secure, password protected drive to which only I have access.

Criminal records check

I have undergone a criminal records bureau check at the enhanced disclosure level.

Who has ethically reviewed the research?

This project has been ethically approved via the School of Education departments ethics review procedure.

What happens if I do not want to take part or I change my mind?

It is up to you if you want to take part.

If you decide to take part and then change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time without needing to give a reason.

If you would like to take part in the questionnaire and/or interview then you need to complete the consent form enclosed and give it to your tutor who will leave it in a box in the ELP office for me to collect.

Contact for further information

Emily Taylor
edp12et@sheffield.ac.uk

What if something goes wrong?

If you ever wish to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research you should contact my supervisor Lorraine Campbell at The School of Education, The University of Sheffield, 388 Glossop Road, Sheffield, S10 2JA.

If you do not feel that your complaint has been handled to your satisfaction then you can contact the University's 'Registrar and Secretary' Office of the Registrar and Secretary

Firth Court, Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TN.

Appendix 6. Information sheet for Staff



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

My name is Emily Taylor, I am a student at the University of Sheffield, and I have asked your school to take part in a research project that I am carrying out. I would like to collect your views about the E-Learning programme (ELP) and whether you think it helps to young people with their education. This will be done via a short questionnaire and possibly a short interview.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and decide whether or not you would like to take part. Please feel free to contact me if there is anything that is not clear or you would like more information or if you have any questions about the research project. Please email me at edp12et@sheffield.ac.uk

Who will conduct the research?

The research will be conducted by myself, Emily Taylor, a student at the University of Sheffield.

Proposed Title of the research

An Evaluative Case Study of the E-Learning programme (ELP) within a Pupil Support Centre.

What is the aim of the research?

My main aim is to find what you think about the ELP. I also want to see if staff and young people think that the ELP can help children with their education.

Where will the research be conducted?

Within the ELP or the ELP office at the centre.

How long will the research take?

The project will run from March through to July. You will only have to complete one short questionnaire and one short interview.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire about the ELP. The questionnaire will take around 15 minutes to complete.

You will also be asked if you are willing to take part in a short interview, following on from the questionnaire to provide me with more understanding about the questions you have completed. The interview will be recorded either by audio recorder or a copy of our chat online will be printed off, so that I can analyse the information.

What happens to the data collected?

The data will be analysed by me. I will then write a report based upon what I have found. I hope to publish the findings in a journal article. In all reports the data will be presented anonymously, no names will appear anywhere.

How is confidentiality maintained?

All data will be treated confidentially and will be completely anonymous, no names will appear anywhere. All data will be stored on a secure, password protected drive to which only I have access.

Criminal records check

I have undergone a criminal records bureau check at the enhanced disclosure level.

Who has ethically reviewed the research?

This project has been ethically approved via the School of Education departments ethics review procedure.

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It is up to you if you want to take part.

If you decide to take part and then change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time without needing to give a reason.

If you would like to take part in the questionnaire and/or interview then you need to complete the consent form enclosed and leave it in the box in the ELP office for me to collect.

Contact for further information

Emily Taylor

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What if something goes wrong?

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Firth Court, Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TN.

Appendix 7. Consent form for Young People

Young person consent form



The
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Of
Sheffield.

Proposed Title of Project: An Evaluative Case Study of the E-Learning programme (ELP) within a Pupil Support Centre.

Name of Researcher: Emily Taylor
Participant ID number for this project: _____

An information sheet is attached to this form. Please read it carefully before making a decision about taking part in the study.

If you are willing to take part in the questionnaire and/or the interview then all you need to do is sign in the boxes below and give it to your tutor.

Please return the form to me by _____.

		Signed
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet attached for the above project 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 without giving any reason.	
3.	I understand that my responses will be anonymised (no one will know it is me) before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.	
4.	I agree to take part in the above research project: Questionnaire	
	I agree to take part in the above research project Short interview	

Name of participant: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Name of guardian: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Name of person taking consent: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 8. Consent Form for Staff

Staff consent form



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Title of Project: An Evaluative Case Study of the E-Learning programme (ELP) within a Pupil Support Centre.

Name of Researcher: Emily Taylor
Participant ID number for this project: _____

An information sheet is attached to this form. Please read it carefully before making a decision about taking part in the study.

If you are willing to take part in the questionnaire and/or the interview then all you need to do is sign in the boxes below and leave the form in the designated box in the office.

Please return the form to me by _____.

		Signed
1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet attached for the above project 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 without giving any reason.	
3.	I understand that my responses will be anonymised (no one will know it is me) before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.	
4.	I agree to take part in the above research project: Questionnaire	
	I agree to take part in the above research project: Short interview	

Name of participant: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 9. Paper Version of Attitude Scale



The ELP and Me



There are no right or wrong answers, so please try to answer the questions as truthfully as you can. Your answers will not be shown to anyone else.

Please read the statements carefully.


Choose the answer that applies to you by putting a  in the box.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I hate chocolate					
I love mars bars					

Please read the statements carefully.

Choose the answer that applies to you by putting a  in the box.

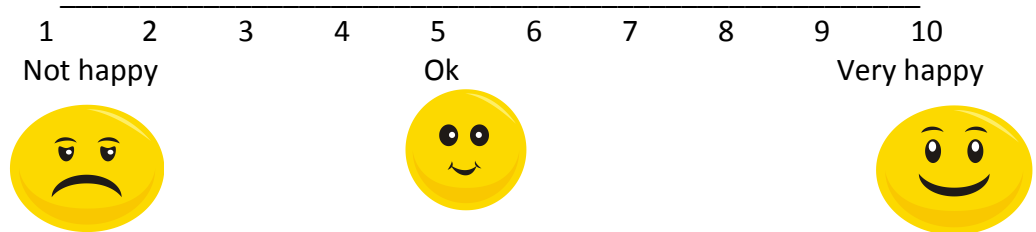
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1 I have no one to talk to when I am learning on the ELP					
2 I am interested to learn new things using the ELP					
3 I am able to talk to people when I am on the ELP					
4 If I can't solve a problem on the ELP, I keep trying different ideas					
5 On the ELP you get rewards for your effort					
6 I get easily distracted when I work on the ELP®					
7 I am good at using the ELP					
8 I feel lonely when I work on the ELP®					
9 I spend lots of time on the ELP					

10	Using the ELP to learn is worth the effort					
11	I do not understand the ELP [®]					
12	I find it hard to do school work on the ELP					
13	I like to learn face to face with a teacher					
14	I am quick to learn new software used for the ELP					
15	The ELP helps me learn better					
16	I feel good when I get something right					
<p>Please read the statements carefully.</p> <p>Choose the answer that applies to you by putting a  in the box.</p>		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17	Learning on the ELP is difficult [®]					
18	I can fix a lot of computer problems					
19	I like using the ELP for learning					
20	I concentrate best when I am on the ELP					
21	Learning is more interesting when using the ELP					
22	Learning on the ELP is fun					
23	I like to work in a group when I am learning					
24	I would prefer to read a book than use the ELP to learn [®]					
25	The ELP bores me [®]					
26	I am good at using things like PS3/Xbox, MP3 Players and Smart phones					
27	The ELP helps me to learn with my friends					
28	I ask for help on the ELP if it is something I do not understand					
29	The ELP is difficult to understand [®]					
30	If I make mistakes, I work until I have corrected them on the ELP					

What do you like about using the ELP?

Are there any problems or anything you would change about the ELP?

How happy are you using the ELP?



Appendix 10. Correlation coefficients for the 30 items on the YP's attitude scale

Item on Attitude Scale	Pearson Correlation	Sig. value
I have no one to talk to when I am learning on the ELP	0.55*	0.001
I am interested to learn new things using the ELP	0.77*	0.000
I am able to talk to people when I am on the ELP	0.30	0.094
If I can't solve a problem on the ELP, I keep trying different ideas	0.63*	0.000
On THE ELP you get rewards for your effort	0.55*	0.002
I get easily distracted when I work on the ELP®	0.66*	0.000
I am good at using the ELP	0.39**	0.031
I feel lonely when I work on the ELP ®	0.57*	0.001
I spend lots of time on the ELP	0.53*	0.002
Using the ELP to learn is worth the effort	0.80*	0.000
I do not understand the ELP ®	0.61*	0.000
I find it hard to do school work on the ELP	0.76*	0.000
I like to learn face to face with a teacher	0.30	0.305
I am quick to learn new software used for the ELP	0.60*	0.000
The ELP helps me learn better	0.89*	0.000
I feel good when I get something right	0.63*	0.000
Learning on the ELP is difficult ®	0.43**	0.016
I can fix a lot of computer problems	0.04	0.833
I like using the ELP for learning	0.72*	0.000
I concentrate best when I am on the ELP	0.54*	0.002
Learning is more interesting when using the ELP	0.62*	0.000
Learning on the ELP is fun	0.81*	0.000
I like to work in a group when I am learning	0.29	0.114
I would prefer to read a book than use the ELP to learn®	0.53*	0.002
The ELP bores me ®	0.79*	0.000

I am good at using things like PS3/Xbox, MP3 Players and Smart phones	0.24	0.201
The ELP helps me to learn with my friends	0.53*	0.002
I ask for help on the ELP if it is something I do not understand	0.45**	0.011
The ELP is difficult to understand ®	0.41**	0.024
If I make mistakes, I work until I have corrected them on the ELP	0.58*	0.001

ns= not significant ($p > 0.005$)

*correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Appendix 11. Paper Version of Staff Questionnaire

There are no right or wrong answers, so please try to answer the questions as truthfully as you can. Your answers will not be shown to anyone else.

Please read the statements carefully. Choose the answer that applies to you by putting a x in the box.



A space has been left below each question for you to add reasons for your choice.



1. How effective do you feel the ELP is in supporting young people with their learning?

Very effective	Effective	Average	Ineffective	Very ineffective
----------------	-----------	---------	-------------	------------------

Please give reasons for your answer

2. How effective do you feel the ELP is helping young people manage their behaviours?

Very effective	Effective	Average	Ineffective	Very ineffective
----------------	-----------	---------	-------------	------------------

Please give reasons for your answer

3. How effective do you feel the ELP is in helping young people who cannot attend education settings to access education?

Very effective	Effective	Average	Ineffective	Very ineffective
----------------	-----------	---------	-------------	------------------

Please give reasons for your answer

4. How effective do you feel the ELP is in supporting and developing young people's social interaction skills?

Very effective	Effective	Average	Ineffective	Very ineffective
----------------	-----------	---------	-------------	------------------

Please give reasons for your answer

5. How effective do you feel the ELP is in supporting young people with their engagement and motivation to learn?

Very effective	Effective	Average	Ineffective	Very ineffective
----------------	-----------	---------	-------------	------------------

Please give reasons for your answer

6. How easy is it for young people to understand and use the technology of the ELP?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Difficult

Fairly

Very Easy

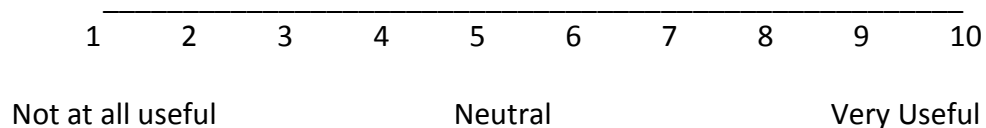
Please give reasons for your answer

7. How would you rate your experience of using the ELP as a teacher?

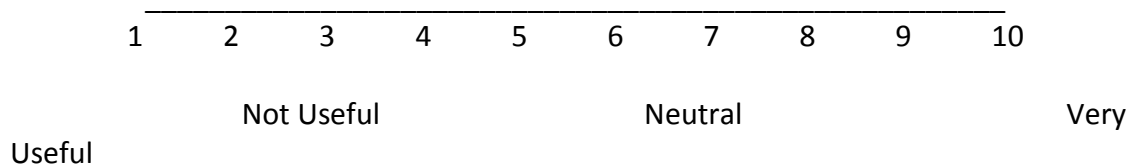
Excellent	Good	Neutral	Fair	Poor
-----------	------	---------	------	------

Please give reasons for your answer

8.How useful have you found the ELP as a means of teaching young people with behaviour difficulties?



9.How useful have you found the ELP as a means of teaching young people with medical needs?

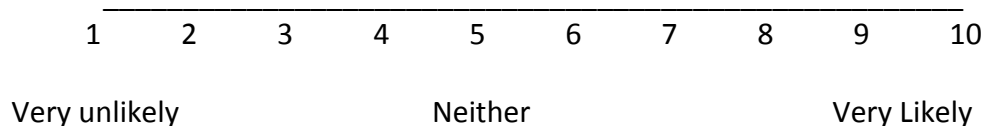


10.What do you think works well about teaching using the ELP?

11.Do you feel there are any problems with the ELP?

12.Would you make any changes to the ELP? Circle yes/no
If yes what would they be?

13.How likely would you be to recommend the ELP to others?



Appendix 12. Interview Prompt Sheet

Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire/scale.

I would like to know more about using ELP and this is your opportunity to say more about your answers on the questionnaire/scale.

I was wondering was there anything in particular you were thinking...

What made you choose to tick...?

What were your reasons...?

I see you rated this as...

I was wondering what made you choose...

What were you thinking when you rated this question...

Appendix 13. Ethical Approval Letter



The School Of Education.

Emily Taylor
c/o DEdCPsy – 2012 Cohort

2nd May 2014

Head of School
Professor Cathy Nutbrown

School of Education
888 Glossop Road
Sheffield
S10 2JA

Telephone: +44 (0)114 222 8096
Email: edd@sheffield.ac.uk

Dear Emily

ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

"An evaluative case study of a virtual learning provision within a pupil support centre"

Thank you for submitting your ethics application. I am writing to confirm that your application has now been approved.

We recommend you refer to the reviewers' additional comments (please see attached). You should discuss how you are going to respond to these comments with your supervisor BEFORE you proceed with your research.

This letter is evidence that your application has been approved and should be included as an Appendix in your final submission.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Dan Goodley
Chair of the School of Education Ethics Review Panel

Enc Ethical Review Feedback Sheet(s)

Appendix 14: Table of Frequency and percentage of respondents (n=31) returning the item response for the 26 item attitude scale, with mode and median

Item response	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neither	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree	Mode	Median
Item number							
4 BE	1	20	3	5	2	2	2
If I can't solve a problem on ELP, I keep trying different ideas	3%	65%	10%	16%	6%		
6 BE	3	6	8	7	7	3	3
I get easily distracted when I work on ELP®	10%	19%	26%	23%	23%		
9 BE	1	13	11	3	3	2	3
I spend lots of time on ELP	3%	42%	36%	10%	10%		
20 BE	4	10	9	6	2	2	3
I concentrate best when I am on ELP	13%	32%	29%	19%	7%		
28 BE	8	18	3	0	2	2	2
I ask for help on ELP if it is something I do not understand	26%	58%	10%	0	7%		
30 BE	7	10	10	4	0	2 and 3	2
If I make mistakes, I work until I have corrected them on ELP	23%	32%	32%	13%	0		

7 TC	8	16	4	2	1	2	2
I am good at using ELP	26%	52%	13%	7%	3%		
11 TC	1	1	2	13	14	5	4
I do not understand ELP®	3%	3%	7%	42%	45%		
12 TC	2	2	5	13	9	4	4
I find it hard to do school work on ELP®	7%	7%	16%	42%	29%		
14 TC	5	14	9	1	2	2	2
I am quick to learn new software used for ELP	16%	45%	29%	3%	7%		
2 AE							
2 AE	5	14	6	3	3	2	2
I am interested to learn new things using ELP	16%	45%	19%	10%	10%		
5 AE							
5 AE	12	10	6	1	2	1	1
On ELP you get rewards for your effort	39%	32%	19%	3%	7%		
16 AE							
16 AE	7	16	7	1	0	2	2
I feel good when I get something right	23%	52%	23%	3%	0		
17 AE							
17 AE	0	3	6	16	6	4	4
Learning on ELP is difficult®	0	10%	19%	52%	19%		
22 AE							
22 AE	4	12	8	4	3	2	2
Learning on ELP is fun	13%	39%	26%	13%	10%		
25 AE							
25 AE	3	3	7	13	5	4	4
ELP bores me®	10%	10%	23%	42%	16%		

10 ALC	10	10	3	6	2	1 and 2	2
Using ELP to learn is worth the effort	32%	32%	10%	19%	7%		
15 ALC	7	13	5	4	2	2	2
ELP helps me learn better	23%	42%	16%	13%	7%		
19 ALC	6	14	8	0	3	2	2
I like using ELP for learning	19%	42%	26%	0	10%		
21 ALC	8	9	7	5	2	2	2
Learning is more interesting when using ELP	26%	29%	23%	16%	7%		
24 ALC	1	3	10	9	8	3	4
I would prefer to read a book than use ELP to learn®	3%	10%	32%	29%	26%		
29 ALC	1	0	8	12	10	4	4
ELP is difficult to understand®	3%	0	26%	39%	32%		
1 SI	2	5	3	15	6	4	4
I have no one to talk to when I am learning on ELP®	7%	16%	10%	48%	19%		
3 SI	8	16	4	1	2	2	2
I am able to talk to people when I am on ELP	26%	52%	13%	3%	6%		
8 SI	1	2	8	14	6	4	4
I feel lonely when I work on ELP®	3%	7%	26%	45%	19%		

27 SI	3	5	12	7	4	3	3
ELP helps me to learn with my friends	10%	16%	39%	23%	13%		

® Negatively phrased

Appendix 15: Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis

Phases of thematic analysis	Description of the process
Familiarisation of the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Transcribed the data · Re-read and checked transcripts against voice recordings · Recorded a list of initial ideas
Generated initial codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Systematically assigned codes across the entire data set, by highlighting extracts and making notes · Collated data relevant to each code
Searched for themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ordered codes presented · Organised codes into potential themes
Reviewed themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Checked data extracts corresponded with coded themes (level 1) and checked across all data (level 2) · Created a thematic map of potential themes
Defined and named themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Read and re-read the collated extracts within each theme to ensure the themes were logical, consistent and distinctive · Generated and ensured themes were clearly defined and reflected the meanings evident in the data set, recordings listened to and transcripts re-read in relation to the thematic map · Re-organised themes and data extracts where necessary
Produced the report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Final analysis of themes · Related the analysis to the RQs and literature. Selected vivid extracts to support findings and related back to analysis · Wrote up the data analysis to be included within results section

Appendix 16: Example of a YP's coded transcript

1.		I have no one to talk to when I'm learning on the ELP, you put agree. What made you put agree?
2.	Feelings of isolation	No one talks to me.
3.		Ok, do you mean students, teachers?
4.	Lonely Communicate with people	I mean sometimes C (a tutor) says hello and stuff, but normally no one talks to me.
5.		Are you online at the same time as other people?
6.	Isolation	Yeah. Everyone is just a bit nervous to talk to everyone like they don't want to talk to me.
7.		Right, and do you think that's because you've not met some people before?
8.	Lonely	Probably.
9.		Ok, so talk to people when I'm the ELP, you put strongly agree. You're able to talk to people; in what way can you talk to people?
10	Communicate with people	That chat thing.
11		Yeah, is that the best way? You don't have a headset?
12		No.
13	Rewards	Ok, on the ELP you get rewards for your efforts, you put neither.
14		Oh I do, I was just like really bored so I will just tick anything.
15		Right, so what would you put now then? On the ELP you get rewards for your efforts?
16	Type of rewards	Yeah I agree because you get certificates.
17		Ahhhh ok, do they make you work harder?
18	Rewards Motivation	I'm not really bothered.
19		Right ok, if they have different sorts of rewards?
20	Type of rewards	Maybe if they had other stuff.
21		That would make you work harder?
22	Type of rewards	Yeah, if there was better rewards that just a certificate where you just put it in a folder and never look at it again.
23		I feel lonely when I work on the ELP?
24	Lonely	Yeah that's why I put sometimes.
25		Right ok, does that depend on anything in particular?
26		No.
27		Just depends what sort of day it is?
28		Yeah.
29		Ok, you find it hard to do school work on the ELP, you've put neither.
30	Level of ease	Because sometimes it's hard and sometimes it's not.
31		So it depends on what work it is?
32	How I feel about the	Yeah, Maths I just delete everything...literally if she sends me Maths I'm just like delete.

	work	
33		Right, and if she sends you...what would be the opposite of Maths?
34		Errrm, maybe art or something.
35		Ok, why do you delete Maths?
36		I hate Maths.
37		Ok is it because of the work, is it because you find it hard, is it because you didn't like your old maths teacher?
38	How I feel about the work	When I was at high school, in the maths lessons there was a pupil there who I didn't like at all.... But no it's just cos I hated the teacher, was always shouting and walking out especially with the kids, I just didn't like it. So that's probably why I hate it the most, because it makes me think of that...that's why I'm like, delete.
39		I like to learn face to face with a teacher, you've put agree.
40	Communicate with people	Yeah I do.
41		Ok, I feel good when I get something right, strongly agree?
42		Yeah.
43		Is that on the ELP and in School?
44	Supporting my learning	If I get it right I go yeah I'm not failing, but if it's like you've done it wrong then poop.
45		Would you have another go if you've done it wrong?
46		Nope.
47	Being able to concentrate	Ok, you concentrate best when you're on the ELP, agree?
48		In a sense, like it is and it isn't....I like both you know.
49		Where do you concentrate best, when you're on the ELP or in school?
50	Being distracted	Normal school? Not in a normal school, I like it here and on a computer.
51		Ok, why what's the difference?
52	Being distracted Being able to concentrate	Because there are not people I hate here, everyone's nice to you including kids. Teachers don't shout every second of the day, smaller classes, less pressure and they help you a lot more with your work. IT's a lot more fun and yeah it's better.
53		Ok, so that links to learning is more interesting when using the ELP, agree? So you like working on the computer to learn?
54	Technology helps me learn	Yeah.
55		I like to work in a group when I'm learning, you've put neither?
56	Isolation	I don't really like too many people around, pairs or something.
57		Smaller groups, ok. The ELP helps me to learn with my friends?
58	Isolation Communicate with people	Put neither because I don't really talk to them.
59		Right ok, if I make mistakes I work till I've corrected them on the ELP, you've put disagree?
60		Yeah just delete it.
61		Ok, tell me what is the best thing about using the ELP, about having the ELP.

62	Technology helps me learn	It is easier than writing it down, I'm a little bit quicker when I'm on there. Sometimes I misplace a key and I'm like god. I like it that you type it all and it checks if you've spelt it right. I really do like working, I'm not on it now because I'm always here.
63		Ok, so when you were on it, when you used to be on it every day or every other day, is there anything you think they could do to change it or make it better?
64	Improvements	Maybe add few more subjects, like what people are more interested....they've got a drama thing...you can still do drama stuff that's not on a thing.....but you know different subjects.
65		Ok, so you put, how happy using the ELP you've put yourself as a 5. What made you choose a 5?
66	Motivation Communicate with people	Because I do and I don't....you know. It's like I sometimes get bored....or like I can't be bothered but that's just me. Sometimes I'm like I want to talk to someone and I feel awkward randomly going hi, and I'm like are they working really hard or just sat there like me.
67		Ok, what year are you in?
68		Year 10.
69		Right so what will you want to do in September?
70	My Future	I wanna do Maths, nope. Errrrmmm, art, drama I don't know if they do music here. I don't know, but maybe that and ermm, that's all I could think of.
71		Ok so would you like to still be using the ELP next year?
72	Being distracted	I don't know, I prefer it here because when I'm on a computer I can get distracted really easily whereas here they're just like Alex in my ear.
73		Ok so that's good, did it help you when you first came out of school?
74	Supporting my learning	Yeah it did.
75		So it was a good thing to help you but now you're at a point where you kind of ready to come back into school?
76		Not a normal school; this school. I would never go back ever.
77		Ok so after here, you do your GCSEs, what would you like to do then?
78		I have no idea.

Appendix 17. Negative Profile Sample

From the paper version of the attitude scale this YP completed they presented with the second most negative attitude out of the eight YP interviewed. The profile of this YP is a female in year 9, with MN, a reading age two years lower than her chronological age; she started the ELP in March 2014 and had logged on for a total of 20.5 hours.

This YP shared that her friends do not use the ELP and so she does not have anyone to talk to, saying 'I don't like anybody on there (the ELP)', she said that she liked working in a group because she does not like to be on her own.

In relation to the sub-area of behavioural engagement, this YP said that she was easily distracted when she was learning on the ELP because she was at home where she had easy access to her phone and other possible distractions.

When asked about rewards in her interview this YP recognised that she had scored disagree for getting rewards on the ELP and she asked to change her answer because she realised that they did. She went on to talk about receiving vouchers, however she did not seem confident in what she was saying '...a voucher thing.' The YP also said that when she got rewards this made her work more and then feel good, 'It's not immediate (the good feeling) but you do in the end.'

With her negative attitude to the ELP she was limited on the answers she provided about what she liked and any future improvements, providing quite

short answers. This YP said that she liked the topics on the ELP, she was not sure if she would prefer to learn at school or use the ELP and she suggested that the ELP needed to be brighter.

In general this YP appeared to change her mind between her attitude scale and what she said in her interview. She admitted to being easily distracted especially when on the ELP and to sometimes not understanding what was presented to her on the ELP, this could be the major reasons for her negative attitude of the ELP. She found the ELP to be boring, only rated herself as four on how happy she was using the ELP and said she wanted it to be easier to use.

Appendix 18. Positive Profile Sample

This YP had SEBD needs and had only recently started to access the ELP, he shared that he did not miss being at school. He liked being able to concentrate on a computer when learning and not have the distractions of teachers talking to him. His profile states that he was male, year 10, his reading age was three years below his chronological age and he completed the attitude scale online.

The sub-area of affective engagement showed that this YP had been told about the rewards they could receive from the ELP and he said knowing about the rewards would make him work harder. He also agreed with item 16, 'I feel good when I get something right'; he said that he found it easier to concentrate when there was no one else in the room with him; and he found the ELP was fun.

On the happiness rating this YP rated himself at eight, close to being 'very happy' to use the ELP. He said that he was happy to be learning but he was not sure what he would need to rate himself higher. He shared that he would like to do GCSEs in the future and also spend time using the ELP whilst reintegrating in to a classroom.

During the interview this YP appeared to have quite a neutral perception of the ELP, replying to a number of questions with 'not sure', however his attitude scale score implied a positive attitude of the ELP despite only having joined this area of the PRU in June 2014. He said he had only been on a few times as he started the ELP about a week before the interview.

Appendix 19. Young Person Interview Transcript

	You put here, I have no one to talk to when I'm learning on the ELP, you put disagree, what made you put disagree?
	Because you can go on online chat.
	Ok, who do you chat to?
	Some of my mates and sometimes some of the teachers.
	How long have you been doing it for?
	Since about 5/6 month.
	Ok, if I can't solve a problem on the ELP I keep trying different ideas, you put neither for that one?
	If I can't solve it I just move on.
	Ok, on the ELP you get rewards for your efforts, you put strongly agree. What rewards do you get?
	You get these points, they add up and you get prizes. And you get certificates if you complete a unit.
	Ok, I get easily distracted when I work on the ELP, you put agree?
	Yeah, I normally go on games.
	Right, is that because you're at home and it's quite easy to?
	Yeah.
	I'm good at using the ELP, you've put strongly disagree?
	I don't like using it.
	Ok, do you not think you're good at using it?
	No, I like doing written work, not on a computer.
	Ok so books and things?
	Yeah.
	I feel lonely when I work on the ELP, you've put neither?
	Yeah cos sometimes there's no one on to talk to and sometimes there is.
	Ok, using the ELP is worth the effort....you put strongly disagree?
	Yeah, I would rather learn in a group than on my own.
	I find it hard to do the schoolwork on the ELP, strongly agree?

	Is that because you would be rather be doing it in a class situation, in school?
	Yeah.
	Ok, I like to learn face to face with a teacher strongly agree,

	that's the best way for you to learn?
	Yeah.
	Ok, I feel good when I get something right?
	Yeah.
	Learning on the ELP is difficult, disagree.

	Not difficult?
	No, it's just straight forward....there's no, sometimes it's hard but most of it is easy.
	Right. So you prefer to use a book, find it boring..... the ELP helps me to learn with my friends, you put disagree?
	Because you prefer to be in a group working?
	Yeah.
	But it's not difficult to understand, ok.

	So if I was to say to you then if there's anything about the ELP that's good?
	The rewards.
	Ok, have you had any of the rewards so far?
	I've had certificates, got them in my file at home. Got about ten or 11.
	Ok, so when you were last on the ELP and you were doing a bit of work, if you think about it is there anything that could be different or they could change to make it better?
	I'd rather work in a room with different people but still on the ELP....with other people on the ELP as well.
	Ok and how would that help you?
	Because when we are doing our work we can talk, not too much so you're getting distracted but just chat.
	Ok, how happy are you using the ELP...you rated a 3...what made you choose 3?
	Because I'd rather work in a group....I just find I learn more in a group.
	Do you feel it's helped you in any way?
	It has a bit.
	Ok, so what year you in now?
	10.
	So you'll be in year 11 in September, what would you like to be doing in September?
	Not sure.
	Would you want to carry on using the ELP?
	No, would rather be back in class.
	Back in class with no the ELP at all or still a bit of the ELP.
	Either, I would rather be in class with no ELP, with a teacher.
	Ok, and do you think you would be able to concentrate?
	Yeah.

Appendix 20. Young Person Interview Transcript

	I have no one to talk to when learning on the ELP, you put strongly disagree, I was wondering if you were thinking about anything in particular when you put that?
	No not really, you can basically talk to anybody on there and it's fine.
	Ok. I am interested to learn new things using the ELP, you put strongly agree. What made you choose strongly agree?
	Because, when you open up you have all this stuff and you can just pick from the history and science and all of that, you can learn new things and everything.
	Ok, for this one, I am able to talk to people when I'm on the ELP. You put strongly agree, what were your reasons?
	It's just like having a talk with people you know, even though you are doing work you can also talk to people and it's a good way of building up your communications skills.
	And what different ways do you use when you're on the ELP?
	Normally when I have my one to one sessions I normally talk through a headset, but if I'm talking to another ELP student I would just type.
	Ok so when you talk to your teacher you can talk through your headset but when you talk to other students it's through a chat room?
	Err yeah. You can also do that with teachers and everything but it's just like before I started coming in here I was having mini lessons with a tutor and I was talking through a headset instead of constantly typing.
	Ok, let's have a look. On this one, you've put on the ELP you get rewards for your efforts, you've put strongly agree....what made you put that?
	The certificates. I've got about eighty four near enough one hundred now, got a few extra ones the other day, Yeah, so those are like the rewards you get for doing a lot of work on the ELP.
	Brilliant, are there any other sort of rewards you get?
	I think it's mainly the certificates... we went to Jodrell Bank the other week which was good.
	Who did you go there with?
	All of the ELP teachers and the ELP students.
	Brilliant, ...with this one I get easily distracted when I work on the ELP and you've put strongly disagree?
	Normally when I'm doing my work I'm just normally focussed on it.
	And do you think that's...where about's is your computer located?
	In my room.
	So is it quiet, so the distractions are quiet?
	Yeah it's quiet.
	I'm good at using the ELP, I see you rated that as strongly agree?
	Yeah, at first because it's an apple I normally use windows so I had no idea what I was doing at first but soon as I kept going on it and going on it I can use it a lot better now.
	Brilliant, I feel lonely when I work on the ELP? You rated that strongly disagree?
	You don't really feel lonely, you can always talk to people and ask for help.
	And are there always people there to talk to, teachers and students?
	Yep.
	Using the ELP to learn is worth the effort, I was just wondering what made you choose strongly agree?
	I like, it's worth the effort because it helps out in a lot of ways. Ever since I've started doing the ELP, I was unsure for about half a year I think and ever since I've started using the ELP I've

	learnt a lot more things now, in particular things like history, I really do like history, and I've got better with my English and all that stuff.
	This word effort, what does that mean to you?
	I would say you're working towards something, and you make the effort to put in your work.
	Ok so is the ELP an effort do you think?
	I think so, yeah.
	I find it hard to do school work on the ELP, you rated that strongly disagree?
	Well I think, I've done some work before obviously but just because it's on the computer I just find it a lot more easier, I do like writing everything down but I think it's a lot more easier just to do all of your work on your computer and send it off.
	The ELP helps me learn, you rated that as strongly agree, what made you choose that?
	As I've said I think it's helped me out in a lot of ways and it's just helped learn a lot better.
	Ok, is there anything that the ELP could do that it's not doing to help you?
	Ermmmmm, I don't know, I've never really thought about it.
	Ok, for this one you've put strongly agree, I feel good when I get something right. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
	I don't really know how to put it into words, yeah its nice when you feel like you've got something right.
	Ok so how do you feel when you've got something right on the ELP?
	Yeah, happy.
	You've put, I concentrate best when I am on the ELP....strongly agree. What made you choose strongly agree?
	Well at first before I started in the centre I was on the ELP doing everything online, doing all my work through the computer. I like learning when I am on the ELP, but since I've started coming to the centre I can work a lot better in the centre and when I work on the ELP.
	How long have you been on the ELP?
	I think I started in October.
	Ok so just for this year?
	Yeah.
	Ok so were you home schooled before that?
	I think I was home schooled in about 2012. And I wanted to go back to school in 2013, because I was in year 10 and wanted to get my GCSEs and everything and obviously that didn't really work out well because of my anxiety and all that. And I think I started using ELP when I was in October last year.
	And you feel it's helped?
	Yeah it's helped me a lot.
	Ok so does that mean you're in year 11?
	Year 10.
	Ok so what would you like to happen next year?
	Ermmm I think I would like to still come here as it's really nice and really good.
	Right that's good, and what are your dreams after?
	My biggest dream is going to Japan, the first thing that got me into Japan is the stuff that they watch called anime. But after watching that I started to like the culture a lot more and the history, mostly about the samurai era because I really like the style of the weapons and the armour and all that stuff.
	So that links in with your history interests?
	Yeah.
	Good, I like to work in a group when I'm learning, you rated this as neither?
	Well I think it goes back, it depends on how big the group is. Because when I was in high school there was about, don't know how many but there was a lot and it was just chaos

	basically. But when I'm in this group I'm in now it's really nice and good.
	Ok, I would prefer to read a book than use the ELP to learn, you rated that as disagree?
	Yeah, I do read on the computer, but I think I would prefer to read a hand held book....I don't read typically normal books, I read Japanese manga books...they really interest me more than regular books as it has pictures and you can actually tell what's going on instead with a normal book where you have to think up what's happening.
	Right ok, The ELP bores me...you put strongly disagree?
	Because I have so much work to do I don't think it can bore you, and some of the work I've been doing from the Roman Gods to Remembrance Day and D day doesn't bore me that.
	Ok, this one, the ELP helps me to learn with my friends. What made you tick strongly agree?
	It helps me learn with friends, since I've come here I've made friends and yeah.
	So, coming to the centre that's helped you to learn with friends or is it being on the ELP being on the ELP that's helped?
	At first I didn't really talk to anybody when I was on the ELP, I'd only just started and didn't know who was who. But yeah I've been talking to a few people as well as when I come into the centre.
	So, when you're on the ELP and talk to people, ...like you said you didn't know who was who...how would you recognise people?
	I did something with a tutor which tells you who you are sort of thing.
	So that helped you to recognise people and make friends?
	Yeah.
	Ok, I ask for help on the ELP if it's something I do not understand. What made you choose strongly agree?
	I think it goes back to when you can ask anybody on the ELP, because you can always click on a button and pops up who's on the ELP and if there's any ELP teachers online and you can just ask for help and they will help you.
	And you feel quite confident to say?
	Sometimes.
	Does it depend on the tutor, does it depend on what you're asking?
	It depends on both I think.
	If I make mistakes I work till I correct them on the ELP, you rated this as strongly agree.
	Yeah, normally if I make mistakes, I think it really depends on what kind of mistake it is. If it's like a tiny little mistake I'll probably just leave it, but if it's just a big mistake I would go back until I did it correct.
	Ok and then the last one. What do you like about the ELP, you put it helps in lots of ways and there's a variety of things to do....anything else you like?
	I think it's all the work basically, I really like doing work and all that stuff, history and all that stuff, mostly history.
	And then, any problems or if you could change the ELP is there anything you would change?
	No I think its fine the way it is, it's fine for me.

Appendix 21. Staff Interview Transcript

	How effective did you feel the ELP was in supporting and developing young people's social interaction skills?
	Not as effective as it could be, because in some ways it isolates them. It's effective in the fact that they have the instant chat room they do use it a lot, and it's effective in that socially. The big minus to it is they are isolated, stuck in their own homes due to the situations that have got them there in the first place.
	How effective do you feel the ELP is in supporting young people with their engagement and motivation to learn?
	If you would have asked me that 12 months ago I would have given that 10 out of 10. Because it has so many different things and the tutors were really well versed going into situations and using it to help the strengths and interests of pupils. For example if you felt they weren't ready to go on the ELP, you could do some decorating with them and all sorts of things. Now it's not as effective because you go in, you instantly need to test them, you have to do maths with them....some of them are still demotivated and it's a distinct difference this year.
	And that distinct difference this year you feel is down to anything?
	Yeah you're going in saying, hi I know you hate school and doing the normal lessons...we are going to start by testing you and then do maths.
	How easy is it for young people to understand and use the technology of the ELP?
	Very easy, for the ones that can read. Usually their IT skills have been well versed since infants these days so it's very easy for them to use computers. The biggest problem they have is they want to play and get round the computers and go on things they shouldn't go on, even though there blocked they find ways of doing it.
	So, do you mean that some young people are a bit more advanced, trying to be more advanced than the technology they are presented with?
	They've just got such good computer skills, so if they have Facebook they find other ways on to it...and that's what they want to use.
	How did you rate your experience of using the ELP as a teacher.
	It's smashing as it has so many different things on it, it's really good. We used to be able to go in and use anything that would take their interest, things like pet care...and I love the fact that you've got so much work from Key stage 1/2/3/4....then you can really aim it to where the pupil is at.
	How useful have you found the ELP as a means of teaching young people with behavioural difficulties?
	I wouldn't say it works itself; we do help people behave with difficulties as we manage them. Expectations are high; it does keep them away from the situations that make them misbehave so that's good. That's about it really.
	How useful have you found the ELP as a means of teaching young people with medical needs?
	Lovely, absolutely great. It can support what they are doing in school or here. I have one young person who when she's off goes on the ELP and absolutely floods it with work, it's great for her. It's what she needs, and she can really keep up to date with what she's doing.
	Do you perceive there to be a difference in what the ELP can offer in those children with medical needs and children with behavioural difficulties?
	NO, as long as the behavioural difficulties want to work. To be honest, it doesn't bother me what they are...I tend not to notice. I just happened to know that some of them are medical needs and have certain aspects I need to cater for rather than anything else, they are quite interchangeable otherwise.

	What do you think works well about teaching using the ELP?
	You've got lots of different resources at your fingertips, you can change quickly if a child goes completely against what you're meant to be doing...you've got other things there instantly for them. You can engage, used to be able to engage sometimes you can with what they're interests are rather than what they should be doing. And that is such an advantage with it. And also the other big advantage, nothing to do with the computer is you go into their homes. You meet their families, you get to realise quite often why they've got the problems they've got. You get very much involved in the families to the point where you're filling in tax returns and all sorts for them. And, you're working with the whole family not just the child, rather than just being in school when you haven't got the foggiest where's the young person's at.
	Do you feel there are any problems with the ELP?
	There are now yeah. The emphasis on English and Maths and testing is not a help to us at all, really isn't. That's a big problem, the other problem is I don't think it helps the social interaction as they don't get much chance to meet other people. We used to do it very informally, we used to have drop-ins where they could get on with each other (we even had an ELP wedding from that or an ELP baby at least??!?!?) NO they are offered English and Maths and ICT, we do offer drama and cooking but it's not being taken up by them as much as it's a more formal situation and that's why a lot of them have left school, because they can't cope with that.
	They can't cope with formal?
	They can't cope with the formal learning situation, it reminds them of school and that's what didn't work in the first place and they don't want to be reminded of it.
	Would you make any changes to the ELP?
	As it is now, yes. I would make it broader, I would make it less school based than it's now becoming. The ELP team is in turmoil at the moment I think as we are changing so much and that's not helping matters. I can't remember what I put for the answer for that...I put two things down.
	OK, how likely would you be to recommend the ELP to others?
	About 50/50. For some pupils it is perfect, it's what they need what they want, it motivates them it gets them back into education again, they go on from us to college, they take up courses that they really enjoy. They actually discover that they can do it and that's wonderful. For others, who need the social interaction and they need to be busy, sticking them in their house with a computer doesn't work because they 're bored, they haven't got the motivation to sit there for 3 hours a day with nobody around them, why should they be doing that if they can be on the PlayStation. They don't get the chance to interact with others and get the social skills, depends on the child and depends on the situation.
	Is there anything that you've not been able to say that you would like to say about the ELP?
	I think if you asked me that question in 12 months' time it will be interesting, because at the moment I don't know what to say...sorry. I'm not sure at the moment what the ELP is, and the ELP is not being the ELP next year as we are all being outreach teaching so what's it going to be I don't know.
	Ok, so what would you like it to be?
	I don't even want to go there, sorry.

Summary Report

A Case Study Evaluation Exploring the Perceptions and Attitudes of an E-learning Programme for Young People who are Non-Mainstream Learners

An attitude scale was designed and distributed to 31 YP in order to elicit their attitude to e-learning, enhanced with 8 semi-structured interviews. The perceptions of 8 staff were accessed through the use of a questionnaire and interviews. The main aims were to investigate the YP's attitudes and staff's perceptions, compare their views and see if anything could be learnt about the ELP for YP who are non-mainstream learner

Findings collected from the attitude scale and staff questionnaire present the impression that the YP have quite positive attitudes to the ELP, 84% YP scored lower than the scale median score and the staff think positively about using the ELP as a tool to educate vulnerable YP with.

Attitude scores were not found to be significantly affected by sub-groups such as gender, year group, type of need, reading age and time logged on. However, the spread of data and the visual charts could suggest differently.

The research has highlighted some messages for the PRU and the development of the ELP, these can be read in further detail in the full thesis. However, due to the low number of fixed sample of participants the results from the current research have limited generalisability to the PRU population and the wider ELP arena.

Learning Points

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Social interaction- Increase group time & access to the centre.

Certificates- Explore the options of providing recognised qualifications on the ELP & increase the options available to the YP.

Reward system- Regularly use a consistent reward system which the YP understand.

Induction- Provide a differentiated induction package, with timely checks carried out to see how YP are feeling about accessing the ELP.

Individual needs- Continue to consider the differing individual needs of all the YP who access the ELP. These needs include their levels of motivation, engagement & interest in using computers.