An exploration of Educational Psychologists' perceptions of enabling and restricting factors affecting children's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes.

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To the University of East Anglia, School of Education, as a thesis of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology, 12th September, 2021.

Abstract

Educational psychologists have a duty to work in a person-centred manner when completing statutory assessments with children (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Code of Practice (2014), Children & Family Act (2014). Over recent years, securing meaningful child involvement appears to have become more important in educational psychologists' practice (Kay, 2019), with studies beginning to explore the methods and tools used to facilitate child involvement (Harding & Atkinson, 2009 Newton & Smillie, 2020). Yet there appears a paucity of research examining what factors educational psychologists identify as enabling or restricting in child involvement.

The current study addresses 3 questions: How educational psychologists in one local authority involve children in statutory assessments, educational psychologists' perceptions of enabling and restricting factors in fully involving children, and how the process might be different to promote children's involvement. A mixed methodology (predominantly qualitative) was utilised, comprising a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with a sample of 6 educational psychologists. Data from two survey questions explored practice in involving children, by age group, quantatively. Data was analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) employing latent and inductive coding.

Results reveal educational psychologists use 30 different approaches/tools with children, ranging from informal (puppets, play) to formal (standardised assessment). Four enabling factors (openness, facilitating child communication, professional skills, practicalities) and four restricting factors (statutory assessment time, powerful non-child voices, availability of information and child preparedness) were identified by participants. Perceptions of how the process might be different yielded four themes (increased time and tools available, prepare children and involve them earlier in the process, develop the process and involve children in planning). The results add to the developing literature, have implications for educational psychologists' practice and suggest a key role for educational psychologists in developing the statutory assessment processes to minimise the restrictive factors identified.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to the following people:

To my late father, Geoffrey Walter Pilkington, (1928-2001). Geoffrey was a Professor of Psychology and taught Psychology at Sheffield University until he retired in 1983. His key message to Psychology undergraduates was “ask yourself, honestly, ‘how do you know’ and ‘what do you mean’”, and by doing so, you will become a good Psychologist.”

To my mother, Isobel Keating, retired Principal Educational Psychologist. You inspired me to believe I was capable of this Doctorate, and I am so pleased I listened to you!

To my husband, Peter, for all his love, support and belief in my ability to succeed.

To my sons, Roland and Stefan, for being such amazing people - I am so proud of you both!

To Suki, for being there whenever I needed her.

To Susie, and Moby (you know what for).

To Matthew and Julie, Thomas and Rachel Pilkington.

To the late Mike Tilbury, for being such a calm and kind stepfather.

To Bob, for making my mother so very happy.

To all my colleagues at my Local Authority and the participants of this study.

To Emma, my Mentor.

To Dr Andrew Rogerson, neighbour and proof-reader, for your eagle-eyed spotting of errors in draft chapters.

And finally, to the co-course directors and my research supervisor at UEA, Dr Andrea Honess and Imogen Gorman.

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Introduction and overview

Historical and legislative factors related to CYP participation

In recent decades there has been an increase in the importance placed upon children and young people's (CYP) participation in a wide range of areas in the UK. This is reflected in legislation (Children & Family Act, CFA, 2015, Department for Education and Skills, Department of Health) which placed responsibilities on Local Authorities (LAs) to ensure CYP are involved in decisions that affect their lives.

Educational psychologist's (EPs) consequently have a legal duty to have regard for CYP's views, feelings and wishes, enabling their full participation by providing support or information required to facilitate this (CFA, 2015). This is highlighted in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (COP), especially in relation to Education & Health Care (EHC) plans (DfE, 2014, p. 147-149). EPs' role within the EHC process is to carry out statutory assessments (SAs) with CYP. Prior to the current restrictions due to COVID-19, EPs completed direct, face-to-face work with CYP, usually in the school setting.

The COP (DfE, 2015) supports children's participation through person-centred approaches (DfE, 2014, para 9.23). An understanding of person-centred working, with italics added to emphasise parts deemed especially pertinent to this study, follows:

- There is a focus on the CYP as an *individual*;
- EPs *enable* CYP to *express* their views, wishes and feelings;
- EPs *enable* CYP to *be part of* the decision-making process;
- Information is *made accessible* and easy for CYP to *understand*;
- EPs enable the CYP, and those that know them well, to *express what they have done*, their interests and *describe outcomes* sought for the future;
- EPs *personalise* support to the *needs of the individual*; they facilitate assessments to minimise demands on families.

Person-centred approaches aim to move power from the adult professional to the CYP user of the service. There is a focus on CYP's experiences, skills, relationships and interests. Such approaches are viewed as especially enabling for CYP with SEND (Bloom, Critten, Johnson and Wood, 2020a).

The literature, however, suggests that person-centred approaches are impacted by a range of factors. Robinson (2014) asserts that there remains a gap between the discourse (or ideal) as espoused by the COP and CFA, and the reality, regarding supporting CYP with SEND appropriate opportunities to be involved in decisions on support available to them. Indeed, despite the above legislation, researchers still report that the involvement of CYP with SEND is not universal (Bloom *et al.,* 2020a).

Research continues to demonstrate that CYP with SEND are not involved or consulted in an equal manner compared to children without SEND (e.g. Woods, Parkinson and Lewis, 2010), especially for those with impairments in cognitive skills (Morris, 2003). Bloom *et al.* (2020a) argue further, that LAs continue to struggle to meet their duties in ensuring that the feelings and views of children with complex needs are listened to (Franklin, 2013).

Franklin (2013) highlights several barriers to CYP's involvement or participation in SA processes. These include adults perceiving CYP as having negative capabilities (Willow *et al.,* 2004), a paucity of suitable methods or tools of communication, alongside insufficient time and information (Marchant & Jones, 2003). Other authors report lack of opportunities for both CYP and professionals to develop their skills (e.g. Burke, 2010). Professionals, including EPs, report restricted time to work with CYP and that there are scant opportunities to promote participative processes (Franklin, 2013, Morris 2003).

Rationale

There appears a paucity of research examining what factors EPs identify as enabling or restricting in CYP involvement and no studies appear to explicitly explore, with EPs, what they feel needs to be changed to secure greater CYP involvement. Moreover, relatively few studies have explicitly investigated EPs' approaches. Studies have instead tended to focus on how EPs interpret and represent CYP views (e.g. Ingram, 2013).

Given the identified scarcity of studies, in this LA it was deemed important to research how EPs are not just gathering CYP views but also involving them in the SA process. Moreover, there was an impetus to explore the range of approaches, resources and tools EPs use to facilitate CYP in being involved and communicating, which could lead

to the development of new guidance and tools. In addition, the LA's Children's Services strategic plan had important bearings on the development of this research. It demonstrates the LA's commitment to using person-centred tools and implementing SEND reforms from the Children & Families Act.

The current study addresses 3 research questions:

1. How do EPs in one LA involve CYP in statutory assessments?

2. What do EPs in one Local Authority perceive are enabling and restricting factors in fully involving CYP in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?

3. How might the process be different in the future to promote fuller involvement of children?

Structure of this thesis

This thesis comprises three parts. Part one, a literature review, part two, an empirical paper and part three, a bridging and reflective chapter, details of which are provided below.

The literature review paper

Given the findings reported above, the systematic literature review serves the purpose of exploring how EPs involve CYP within the SA process. In meeting this goal, the rationale of the topic and its theoretical significance will be demonstrated.

There have been only a handful of studies exploring how EPs involve CYP in the SA process, and these will be critically analysed. The literature review paper sets out the context of this study, exploring the historical, legislative, philosophical and ethical parameters of EP practice pertaining to CYP involvement or participation. It critically reviews research on CYP involvement in SA and decision making, examining factors perceived by both CYP and professionals, especially EPs, that enable or restrict their involvement. It offers the reader a summary of the available literature on how EPs involve and promote the participation of CYP, alongside the approaches, tools and

resources they typically use. Relevant psychological theories encapsulating CYP participation are explored and the benefits of involving CYP are outlined. Barriers to meaningful and authentic CYP participation are highlighted. The literature review indicates a gap in available studies which is addressed through the empirical paper. Models of CYP participation are introduced before conclusions are drawn.

The empirical paper

Having identified the need for further studies, the current research focuses on how EPs in the researcher's service practice to involve CYP: this is addressed in the empirical paper. This paper presents a detailed description of the research's aims, epistemological foundations, the rationale for the design and methodological procedures, including participant recruitment and sampling.

A mixed methodology (predominantly qualitative) was utilised, comprising a survey questionnaire with a sample of six EPs. Four EPs opted in to participate in semi-structured interviews, which were recorded and transcribed.

Data from two survey questions explored EP practice, in terms of approaches, tools, resources and strategies in involving CYP, by age group, and key stage, quantitively.

Data from both the surveys and semi-structured interviews was analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) employing latent and inductive coding.

Thematic analysis is described based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage model as a framework. Evaluative criteria (Lincoln and Guba 1989) are applied and outlined alongside ethical considerations being detailed.

The quantitative results to research question 1 are presented in tables 2 (how EPs involve CYP at key stages), 3 (frequencies of approaches used by EPs) and 4 (frequencies of named tools used by EPs) followed by a descriptive commentary.

Qualitative results, yielded from both survey and transcribed interviews to research questions 2 and 3 are set out, with four themes pertaining to enabling and four to facilitating factors apparent in the data. Four themes were evident regarding how the process might be altered to promote improved CYP involvement. The results are then discussed, with implications for practice outlined, before conclusions are drawn.

The bridging and reflective chapter

The final chapter provides the reader with an insight into the researcher's reflective and reflexive diary accounts, including adapting to the impact of a global pandemic. A reflective position statement is given to promote transparency, alongside an anecdotal and personal historical view on CYP participation in SA.

The study's methodology is critically examined in detail, with identified strengths to the approaches taken outlined. There follows a critical exploration of decisions taken, the studies' weaknesses and limitations. The researcher's learning journey is recounted, with the final section highlighting implications for EP practice and service delivery, at both local and national levels, with proposed dissemination of the study being described. Tentative suggestions for future research conclude this final section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An exploration of Educational Psychologists' perceptions of enabling and restricting factors affecting children's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes.

Overview

This section offers a critical review of research in children and young people's (CYP's) involvement, or participation, in statutory psychological assessments and decision making, alongside the factors that are perceived by them and by adult professionals as enabling or restricting them in expressing their views. It also includes research covering the ways in which Educational Psychologist's (EPs) involve and promote the participation of CYP, and the approaches or tools typically utilised.

1.1 Systematic search

The literature is described based on a systematic analysis. Thus, when the researcher identified omissions or discord, her understanding of discourses on CYP participation was broadened, and research questions refined. Yet the critical review did not merely assist in framing research questions (Cresswell, 2009). It also facilitated the researcher in developing understanding of the body of knowledge whereby the themes and results from this study could be usefully compared and contrasted later on.

1.1.2 Search criteria

To aid selecting appropriate literature, the researcher systematically searched databases such as EBSCO host, Psychinfo and ERIC, using a range of search terms. Search keywords utilised included: 'statutory assessment', 'child/young person participation', 'child/young person/pupil involvement', 'child/ren's voice/s', 'listening to children/young people', 'special educational needs', 'inclusion', 'person-centred', 'self-

determination', educational psychologist', 'consulting with', 'decision making', 'advocating for', 'professional practice', 'eliciting', 'perceptions of', 'procedures' and 'Education & Health Care/EHC'.

As suggested by Doncaster & Thorne (2000), alongside this, searches of specific journals were conducted. Doncaster & Thorne (2000) emphasise that professional Doctorate researchers should engage with processes of reflection and planning, to devise a comprehensive research plan, thereby promoting critical reflection. Thus, the researcher wanted to engage with publications such as *Educational Psychology in Practice, British Journal of Educational Psychology* and *British Educational Research Journal* to ensure research was both relevant and applicable to 'real world' EP practice. The researcher also looked for profession-specific presentations from conferences, such as the Division of Educational and Child Psychologists.

Particular attention was paid to studies employing research methodologies related to survey questionnaires, focus groups and interviews, as these reflect the methodology of the current study to a greater extent than empirical studies. Studies are overwhelmingly qualitative, as to be expected in the fluid and ambiguous field of gathering and interpreting CYP views. There were no date exclusion criteria for studies, because a historical context was deemed pertinent in telling the story of how CYP participation has changed over time. Similarly, both national and international studies were included, although more attention was paid to UK studies because the current study is focussed on this context. This approach to literature identification enables the inclusion of a wide range of studies, with different sampling, such as studies with small data sets and single cases studies, thereby resulting in the 'net' of search to be as wide as possible. Because many studies omit details on age banding, the term CYP can be understood to constitute any child aged from 0-21, in line with Howarth (2014).

1.2 Introduction

The review begins by outlining a socio-historical context, and then considers the legislative, policy and professional guideline requirements applicable to EPs' statutory assessment (SA) duties. SA was chosen as opposed to other types of EP assessments because both regulations and legislation make clear the EPs' duty to work in a person-centred manner (e.g., Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (COP, 2014), Children and Family Act (Department for Education {DfE}, Department of Health {DoH} 2015). Moreover, it is an important area for EPs: over recent years it appears to have become more important in EP practice (Kay, 2019), and is reflected by an increase in studies (e.g., Newton and Smillie, 2020).

A critical discussion of what is meant by CYP's participation and involvement is offered, defining terms used within this study. Special Educational Needs (SEN) are explored, followed by a range of pertinent ethical and philosophical aspects that EPs need to consider. A number of psychological theories of participation are then explored. The benefits of CYP's involvement and participation from the literature are outlined, with a range of identified barriers to meaningful participation being described. Models of CYP participation are introduced, with the literature on participation and involvement with EPs being reviewed, before conclusions are drawn.

1.3 Socio-historical background

A number of researchers (e.g., Gersch, 2001) have highlighted an increase in the importance placed upon children's participation in a wide range of areas, and the 'voice of the child' in the UK since the 1991 ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Article 12 therein detailed that children possess the right to express their views and that these be given appropriate weight in areas that affect them, whilst Article 13 specified CYP's right to freely express themselves. The latter includes the right to have access to information in ways that enable CYP to understand. Finally, Article 17 prompts governments to give children access to a wide range of materials / information.

Some researchers have explored the above UNCRC Articles and their influence on EP practice. For example, Kay, in his 2019 review of SEND legislation, policy and EP practice, narrates how in UK education, and in EP practice, the move from "passivity" to "protection" and towards "participation" is progressing. Other researchers, e.g., Robinson and Taylor (2007) relate the term participation very closely, if not synonymously, with the term empowerment. Yet, Kay (2019), points out that England lacks published resources that are linked explicitly to the UNCRC, leading him to question how far practices within school settings are compatible with policies enshrined in law.

Kay (2019) reflected on working with CYP with medical conditions undergoing risk assessments within education, and argues for development of their self-advocacy skills. He posits that EPs are in a unique position to aid the development of CYP's advocacy skills, in the context of preparation for adulthood. In conceptualising developing EP practice to facilitate this, Kay (2019) concludes that EPs should practice so as to promote CYP's self-advocacy, and asserts that participation be viewed as a move closer to self-advocacy.

The changes in EP practice towards greater CYP participation in SA appear to be reflected if one reviews previous working practices. Knight & Oliver (2007) explain how traditional societally held perceptions of children with disabilities painted them as being vulnerable, passive and needing protection. Based on research by Darbyshire (2000), Oakley, (1994) and Gersch and Thorne (2016), it is the researcher's understanding that psychology had, to an extent, been done '*to'* CYP in the early-mid decades of the 20th century. It seems that the shift to doing psychology '*with'* CYP arguably mirrors the increasing importance being focused on CYP's participation.

Komulainen (2007) completed fieldwork in two Special Educational Needs (SEN) specialist settings, and argues that both ethical and practical ambiguities impact on the extent to which professionals can 'listen' to CYP. In conclusion, Komulainen (2007) asserts that CYP's 'voices' are socially constructed, and suggests researchers employ reflexivity as a strategy to facilitate ethical research conduct. Moreover, Komulainen (2007) posited that support in the UK for involving children in making decisions was growing steadily, yet when one views this against a timetable of relevant legislation, the somewhat slow pace of progress perhaps reflects how challenging this

seismic shift has been. Indeed, the 1981 Education Act went only a little way in taking account of CYP's views on provision in education, and there was no specific guidance issued to EPs on the level of participation CYP be afforded. Moreover, a CYP's perceived capability to *give* views was largely determined based on their age and maturity, which was open to interpretation. Kliene (2003) argues that historically, CYP with SEN were excluded from processes such as decision-making relating to educational provision. Furthermore, CYP's views appear to have often been subsumed into second-hand views provided by professionals, or those which reflect their parents' experiences (Armstrong, 2007).

Holey (1982) in her MSc small-scale study of CYP in a UK city-centre context using interview methodology, reported that 43% of CYP were uncertain around the EP assessment and intervention process. However, the generalisability of these findings is not known, and there appear to be very few citations. CYP were, even relatively recently, described by EP researchers as being ascribed a fairly passive role in assessment processes (Gersch, 1992). In 2001, Gersch suggested that the progression to CYP's meaningful participation was slow, unsystematic and patchy.

Armstrong, Galloway, and Tomlinson's (1993) study would seem to support this view. They conducted research with CYP which revealed that many did not fully understand the EP role, and lacked awareness about how decisions had been made. These results appear to suggest that the participation of CYP had not progressed since Holey's (1982) study. CYP in Armstrong *et al.'s* (1993) study reported a distinct lack of information regarding the purpose or outcome of EP interviews. It was suggested that CYP's behaviour in interviews was related to and influenced by their beliefs on the purpose of the assessment.

Likewise, Cooper (1993) emphasised that the ways in which CYP respond to adult-asked questions may be dependent upon their perceptions of interviews. His study comprised 24 interviews and 53 questionnaires with boys aged 14-16 at two non-maintained residential settings, for pupils identified with 'emotional and behavioural' difficulties. Yet Cooper's (1993) article failed to provide details of the manner in which data were analysed, nor how the sample was chosen, making it difficult to critically appraise it.

Child development social studies, such as Cooper (1993), have nevertheless proved highly relevant in driving the changing perspectives on the rights of CYP (Hill, 2006). CYP are viewed as beings, as opposed to 'becomings' (Cassidy, 2012) with insightful experiences and ideas to share. Moreover, CYP are increasingly seen as social agents, vis-à-vis being active in both constructing and determining their own social lives, in the lives of others and in the communities within which they reside (UNICEF, 2007). It is these unique views and 'voices' that EPs seek to access when involving CYP.

1.4 Legislative, policy & professional guideline requirements upon EPs

The Children & Family Act (2015) placed responsibilities on Local Authorities (LA) to ensure parents, carers and children are involved in decisions that affect their lives. The resulting legislative framework (CFA, DfES/DoH, 2015) is one factor that has served to spur EPs to discover, create and utilise new approaches and methods to more fully involve CYP (Gersch & Lipscomb, 2012).

There is a legal duty placed upon EPs to have regard for information on the views of CYP which is relevant to their role (CFA, DfES/DoH, 2014). Indeed, children are recognised as 'partners' in the planning and commissioning of services. The CFA outlines principles underpinning guidance and legislation (DfE, 2015, section 19) in the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (COP), especially in relation to Education & Health Care Plans (EHCP, DfE, 2014, p. 147-149).

The COP (DfE & DoH, 2015) can be usefully compared with the previous COP (DfES, 2001) to highlight how the participation of CYP has been strengthened. The researcher drew up a list (Table 1) of what appeared to be the most pertinent points.

Table 1 - differences between previous and current COP, adapted from Sales & Vincent (2018).

Code of Practice	Previous (DfES, 2001)	Current (DfE, 2015)
Name of the formal plan for CYP with complex SEN	Statement of SEN	Education, Health and Care Plan
Involvement of CYP and their families	Recommended	Necessary
Gaining the views of CYP and their families	Recommended	Necessary
Identifying & recording CYP's aspirations	Recommended	Necessary
Identifying and recording defined outcomes for CYP	Recommended	Necessary

The significance and consequences of the UK's ratification of the UNCRC (1989) have been far-reaching. For example, articles 12 and 13 are referenced in essential Educational Psychology professional guidance documents, such as 'Guidance for EPs When Preparing Reports for CYP Following the Implementation of the CFA' (BPS, 2015, 2020). Furthermore, the COP juxtaposes articles 13 and 12, suggesting an acknowledgement of their interdependence. It is the researcher's experience that EP training courses, moreover, place a strong emphasis on the participation and involvement of CYP to facilitate them to give their views, for example, through course texts such as Beaver (2011).

The principles stated in the CFA and COP support the participation of CYP in decision-making. Fox (2017) describes how the COP principles outline EPs' responsibilities to listen to CYP, enabling them to participate in decisions around their SEN. The COP asserts that these principles can be successfully put into practice by LAs, ensuring that CYP are involved in discussions and decisions on their individual SEN support. Moreover, the COP states that parental views should *not* be used as a proxy for CYP's views, as CYP have their own perspective to contribute (DfE, 2015). However, what is meant by *CYP's views* is not specified, as Howarth (2016) points out.

The COP (DfE, 2015) supports children's participation through pedagogical and individual person-centred approaches (DfE, 2014, para 9.23). It refers to person-centred tools and 'one-page profiles' ensuring that: 'EHC plans are developed with the children, young people and parents, and reflect aspirational and achievable outcomes' (DfE, 2014). The term 'person-centred' refers to a range of definitions and approaches. There exist a number of person-centred approaches that EPs can employ, such as Making Action Plans (MAPS) or Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) (Forest, Pearpoint, & O'Brien, 1996).

The COP (2015) describes how person-centred working might be achieved. Below is the researcher's understanding of this, based on studying the COP in university sessions, discussions with fellow trainees in this context, with EP colleagues in the LA context, and from anecdotal experiences. Italics are added to emphasise parts deemed especially pertinent to this study:

- There is a focus on the CYP as an *individual*;
- Professionals/ EPs *enable* CYP to *express* their views, wishes and feelings;
- Professionals/ EPs *enable* CYP to *be part of* the decision-making process;
- Information is *made accessible* and easy for CYP to *understand*;
- Professionals/ EPs enable the CYP, and those that know them well, to *express what they have done*, their interests and *describe outcomes* sought for the future;
- EPs *personalise* support to the *needs of the individual*; they facilitate assessments to minimise demands on families.

Person-centred work, as an emerging concept, seems to lack a single agreed definition, although Harding (2017, p. 105) directly quotes the COP. This is borne out by the researcher's anecdotal experiences in speaking with EPs in services in East Anglia, i.e., that EPs' understanding is very closely related to the COP definition. Yet there seem to be issues with interpretations based solely on the COP. For example, what might be important to one CYP may be irrelevant, or undesirable, to another. Importance is likely to change over time as an individual's needs change (Health Foundation, 2014). It seems therefore that for each CYP, the EP is required to make

decisions to determine the most appropriate way/s in which to involve them, and these will vary across age groups and in response to SEN that CYP may experience.

1.5 Defining participation and involvement

Researchers in psychological, sociological and educational fields use diverse terms, e.g., *hearing* or *listening to* CYP, CYP *views* or *voice of the CYP* (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001, Clark, Kjorholt & Moss, 2005, Norwich & Kelly, 2004). Similar terms include *facilitating CYP participation* and *CYP consultations*. These latter terms seem to have been taken up in political discourse (DfES, 2001b, DfES, 2004, DfE, 2012). Kay (2019) prefers the term "participation" because "voice" implies a CYP is able to vocalise their perspectives. "Participation", on the other hand, suggests an enhanced sense of agency in decision-making.

It is the researcher's view that the terms used matter: listening to is conceptually different to having a view; to possess a voice is not necessarily congruent with any level of participation. Thus, small changes in use of language may perpetuate power differences between CYP and adults, or conversely might empower CYP. Hill (2006) distinguishes the process of consultation with CYP as a views-elicitation process to facilitate decision making, and of participation, with increased direct contributions in making decisions.

The above appear rather subjective and consequently to an extent are open to interpretation, and it is therefore somewhat surprising that the literature does not always define terms. Some authors have however attempted this. For example, Dickens, Emerson & Gordon-Smith (2004) refer to a process that is initiated with an acknowledgement that CYP hold views, which they are enabled to share through the process of adults listening respectfully to them, with views being converted to actions. Likewise, Stafford Laybourn, Hill & Walker (2003) posit that consultations serve the purpose of genuinely listening to and taking seriously CYP views, which are then acted upon. Gersch (2001) likens this process a listening continuum.

In broad terms, 'participation' (or involvement) equates to listening to and engaging with children, although there is certainly debate about the exact definition (Lansdown, 2009). This study uses a definition of participation adopted by The Office of the

Children's Commissioner; The Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE); The National Children's Bureau; The National Participation Forum and Participation Works, as written in their summary report 'Children's participation in decision making' (Davey, Burke and Shaw 2010):

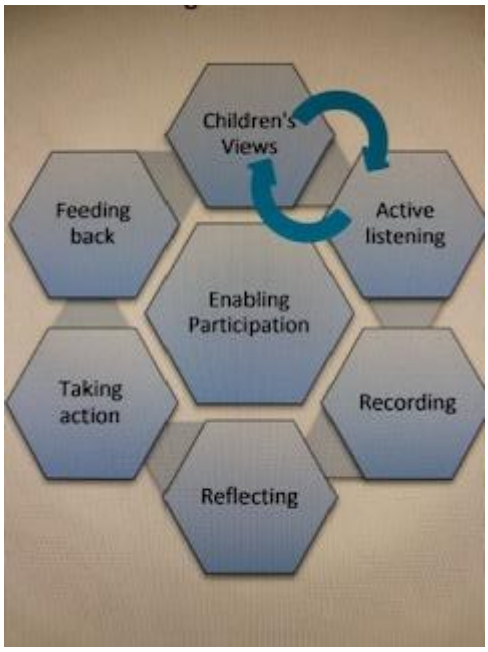
"Participation is a process where someone influences decisions about their lives, and this leads to change." (Treseder,1997).

This was chosen because of its interest in whether CYP can freely express themselves, if their views influence decisions and if that results in change. The resulting nature of change varies, depending on the circumstance and the context, and also relates to the process itself as well as the outcome. Change might happen at an individual level: in the values, attitudes and behaviours of adults or children; at a wider level: how a service is delivered; or at a national level: e.g., a change in policy. A final reason for choosing this definition is that it avoids use of 'voice', with its connotations of the requirement to use speech. It is the researcher's belief that using the term 'listen' includes 'listening' to non-verbal communications by CYP, be that in pictures, symbols, art, drama or puppets. Dickens *et al* (2004) echo this, arguing that whilst CYP communication can be written or verbal, these are only two of many ways they may express their feelings, thoughts, ideas and information.

This is only the first half of the process. The CYP's experience of having an adult hear and then *act upon* their views comprises the second half. Listening is an interactive, reciprocal skill; CYP are unlikely to voice views into a vacuum. Dickens (2011) suggests the interactive nature of listening both acknowledges a CYP's right to be listened to, whilst also validating the importance of those views.

Clark and Williams (2008) devised a useful representation of participation cycles (Fig. 1). In this depiction, the views of CYP can be understood as a participation cycle of initiation, continuation and informing of subsequent participation approaches. The results of CYP participation are discussed in more detail in section 1.7.

Figure 1 Clark & Williams (2008) cycles of participation, adapted from Clark and Williams (2008, p.9)



Participation can be seen as related to empowerment (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). Empowerment is understood in three parts: for a CYP to have access to psychological resources satisfying basic human needs; exercising participation and self-determination; and experiencing competence and self-efficacy, thus facilitating stability and predictability (PrillenItensky, Nelson and Peirson, 2001).

1.6 Ethical and philosophical aspects pertinent to EPs

EPs must also comply with professional guidelines: Standards of Conduct, Performance & Ethics (Health Care Professions Council {HCPC} 2016) and the Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2018). The latter states:

> "psychologists value the dignity and worth of all persons, with sensitivity to the dynamics of perceived authority or influence over persons and peoples and with particular regard to people's rights".

Indeed, the BPS underlines the importance of EPs placing greater focus on fully involving children in decision-making to reduce potential power imbalances (BPS, 2002). The HCPC echoes this e.g., HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance &

Ethics 1.2. Much of the literature seems to centre upon themes of philosophy and epistemological considerations, to which attention is now directed.

Kay (2019) points out that there are philosophical elements to consider in how EPs involve children, by exploring and commenting on how Sewell (2016, p. 1) explored EPs' psychological assessment of SEN for the purpose of EHCP assessments. Sewell (2016) narrates this process as potentially risking "epistemological oppression". This occurs when:

> "one member of an epistemic community has more power in constructing the 'truth' or knowledge of a matter than another" (Sewell, 2016, p.10).

Thus, the questions asked by EPs, and the EP-chosen tools used in the process of CYP participation will influence the construction of knowledge. Sewell (2016) argues that CYP participation be generated in an authentic manner, underpinned by informed decision making. Sewell's article sought to extend the discourse of EPs and anti-oppressive practice, by examining risks in EP assessment activities.

EPs might reduce the risk of oppression by engaging in a "personal attuning to their own epistemological privilege" (Sewell, 2016, p.10). Kay (2019) concurs, and takes the view that EPs' mooring themselves firmly in ethical principles and guidelines, with an emphasis especially on responsibility (British Psychological Society, 2018, p. 6-7) are imperative in practice that is anti-oppressive. Sewell (2016) explains that the inclusion of CYP's 'voice' leads to improved efficacy (Davie, 1993). Sewell (2016) uses Standpoint Theory (Harding, 1991) to argue that those in more powerful positions, such as EPs, may place less value on CYP's 'voice'.

Other research bears this out. Indeed, in Harding & Atkinson's (2009) study, EPs in a focus group spoke of being aware that their involvement of CYP was both brief and tokenistic. It is therefore hypothesised that in the current study, EPs may cite a lack of time for direct work with CYP as part of the SA process as a barrier to facilitating their involvement. The researcher suggests, from anecdotal evidence and experiences as a Trainee EP, that the relentless pressure to complete Psychological Advice to inform the EHCP process may restrict EPs' ability to practice in a truly person-centred manner.

It is interesting to ponder the extent to which social inequalities might be perpetuated by legislation / policies that 'regulate' CYP's voices, and the answer is currently somewhat unclear. Raby (2014) probed this by asking,

> 'what broader inequalities are being inadvertently supported by children's participatory initiatives, and what kinds of subjectivities are being produced?' (p. 79).

Raby (2014) invites discussion of empowering activities for CYP, because they appear to prioritise Western individualism. Thus, from this critical perspective, when EPs involve CYP, there may exist a subconscious goal of 'creating' a CYP who fits in to the autonomous, self-determined and ideal of the neo-liberal climate.

The researcher also reflected on other conceptualisations of CYP's 'voice'. For example, Komulainen (2007) questions the extent to which CYP voice/views can be seen as objects which can be 'possessed, retrieved and verbalised' (p. 23).

1.7 The psychology of participation / involvement

The participation and involvement of CYP relates to principles of empowerment, equality and collaboration (Sanderson, 2000). It has roots in Humanistic principles of psychology such as Personal Construct Psychology (Rogers, 1951 & Kelly, 1955), Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985 & Ryan, 1995), solution focussed approaches (De Shazer, 1985) and positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

1.7.1 Personal Construct Theory

The importance of listening to CYP's views when practicing has been highlighted by Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) Theory (Kelly, 1955). Each CYP has a unique psychology, affecting how they recall and interpret past events, anticipate future events; what drives, influences and motivates them (Kelly, 1955). Moreover, as Gersch and Thorne (2016) assert, CYP are experts on themselves and their lives. When an EP helps a CYP to validate their offered experiences, this can result in

opportunities for the development of life and interpersonal skills, leading to greater agency of their inner worlds. Kelly (1955) believed that how CYP perceive themselves and their view of the world is based upon constructs developed over time due to their individual experiences.

Therefore, if adults act without ascertaining the CYP's views and fail to develop an understanding of the constructs CYP hold, conflict may be created between them (Roller, 1998). To avoid such conflict, each CYP's perspective should be viewed as unique and hence be obtained by adults in order for them to act appropriately on their behalf (Roller, 1998).

Roller's (1998) argument for listening to CYP's views is relevant in EP practice. Roller (1998) explored issues and theories regarding listening to CYP, specifically in the area of records of achievement, where teachers and CYP collaborate in constructing assessment records, with CYP being involved in decision making. Roller (1998) also reviewed initiatives being used in schools and their perceived benefits. Fontana & Fernandes (1994) concur, arguing that understanding the views of individual CYP contributes to the success of future decisions and plans, because their suggestions, agreement, and sense of being heard and understood positively impact on their experiences of learning.

1.7.2 Determination theory

Much of the theory underlying research in CYP's views is linked to self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT can be understood as being focused on the intersection between CYP's intrinsic motivation and their environment, i.e., their drive to participate, use their capabilities in learning and exploring, alongside the social contexts where these tendencies may be facilitated or restricted. Deci & Ryan (2000) summarise SDT as a theory on CYP's motivation to act for themselves, on their own behalf.

Ryan (1995) narrates how CYP's behaviour and independent growth are strongly dependent on both the social and the cultural conditions that serve to nurture the CYP's sense of self. Self-determination can be enhanced by CYP's meaningful participation in three ways: it potentially supports CYP's competence via them

accessing support and information, then being involved in decisions and planning pertaining to them. Relatedness is supported via the promotion of collaborative and positive relationships with others, and finally, self-determination values CYP possessing autonomy in their own lives.

Research indicates a positive relation between CYP with SEN using self-determination skills and then achieving the desirable learning outcomes that EPs are aiming for (Martin, Mithaug, Oliphint, Husch, & Frazier 2002; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes,2000). SDT argues that self-determined CYP make choices, which they act upon, experience the results, and henceforth progress to make new choices (Martin, Woods, Sylvester, & Gardner 2005). Such strategies promote CYP to regulate their behaviour independently from external control, to thus become active participants in their learning.

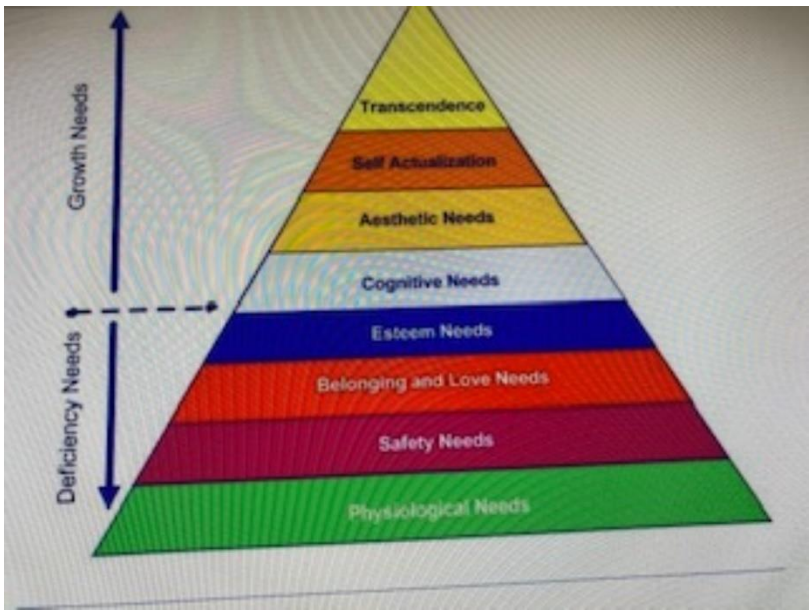
SDT emphasises the significance of belongingness and school-based autonomy to CYP's attainment, psychological adjustment and an engaged approach in school. These appear to mediate the influence of belongingness and autonomy (Van Ryzin, Gravely & Roseth, 2009:1). It is hypothesised that by facilitating increased engagement in school through having their views listened to and taken seriously alongside being involved in decision making, CYP will acquire a sense of autonomy and belongingness in their education, resulting in positive outcomes.

It is the researcher's view that all children have the right to be self-determined, however, research indicates that professionals in education sometimes restrict independence in choice-making for CYP with SEN, making decisions for them as part of an atmosphere of 'knowing best' (e.g., Morgan, Bixler & McNamara, 2002). Wehmeyer (2007) reviewed the literature base and reported that although facilitating self-determination appeared to be an important and valued outcome for CYP with SEN, "many of these students are not self-determined" (page 10). Moreover, there are insufficient opportunities for CYP to acquire self-determination skills (Wehmeyer, 2007). More recently, research is still suggestive that schools fail to promote practices to support self-determination in CYP (Shogren, Burke, Antoshin, Wehmeyer, LaPlante, Shaw, & Raley (2019).

1.7.3 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Figure 2a Maslow's (1970a, 1970b) Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's model, below, is divided into *growth* and *deficiency* needs. For the former, motivation increases as needs are met, whereas for the latter, motivation decreases as needs are met.



Involvement in the SA process, specifically the EP listening to and engaging with CYP, may contribute to their esteem needs, both for the CYP themselves and their desire for respect from others. Self-actualisation needs may be partially met by CYP perceiving their involvement contributed to them achieving their potential. The EP role may facilitate CYP having some cognitive needs met, in terms of supporting their understanding and knowledge. Maslow (1987) argued that needs are flexible, (i.e., they do not have to be met in any particular order) depending upon external circumstances and individual differences.

1.8 Benefits of CYP participation

Research continues to demonstrate that CYP with SEN greatly benefit from being consulted with (Coates & Vickerman, 2013, Lewis, Parsons & Robertson 2006; Shevlin & Rose 2003; Woolfson et al, 2007, Newton & Smillie, 2020). Moreover, it is indicated that participation facilitates development of thinking skills and increases CYP's

learning and self-esteem (Jelly, Fuller and Byers, 2000), boosts confidence and self-image (Gersch, 1996), and promotes decision-making, problem-solving and self-determination (Kjørholt, 2005). Klein (2003) conducted a meta-review of research, internationally, citing extensive examples of situations where CYP's views resulted in tangible outcomes.

Notwithstanding the moral basis for increasing opportunities for CYP's participation, their perspectives are shown to be significant in decision making (Holburn, 2002; O'Connor et al., 2001; Norwich & Kelly, 2004). However, it can be argued (e.g., Jarrett & N'jie (2019) that there needs to be increased effort in finding creative ways to elicit CYP's perspectives, alongside enabling this to contribute in educational planning and decision-making (Norwich & Kelly, 2004). This will be discussed further in a later section of this review.

The benefits of CYP participating in statutory psychological assessment processes will be examined in greater detail in the later sections of the thesis, where links between literature findings alongside results of the current study will be highlighted and critically discussed, with implications for policy development in the researcher's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and suggestions for EP practice outlined.

1.9 Barriers to participation

Earlier studies, e.g., Noble, (2003) reported that CYP's views were rarely sought, and when they were, this was done in a tokenistic manner, leading to them often being ignored. The researcher feels this might reflect psychology being done 'to' rather than 'with' CYP, as outlined in the earlier section (Gersch and Thorne, 2016). MacConville (2006) argued that the views of CYP with SEN are quashed by professional discourses, resulting in CYP being passive recipients of services like Educational Psychology.

Bloom, Critten, Johnson & Wood (2020) argue that there exists a large gap between policy guidelines such as the COP (2014) and the reality of practice, especially for children with disabilities, difficulties with communication or cognitive needs. Indeed, they go further than this and assert that LAs continue to struggle to recognise the feelings and views of CYP with complex needs in SA processes. Several barriers are

identified, including a lack of information, time and methods to effectively promote participation, adults' holding negative views of CYP's capabilities and insufficient opportunities to help professionals acquire the requisite skills.

How prepared are CYP regarding understanding the purpose of meeting an EP and how various roles impact during and after the meeting? Aston and Lambert (2010) sought to investigate this. They reported concerns that the views of CYP with communication disorders were not being sought, resulting in them being both unprepared and unpractised in expressing their views. A similar lack of preparation was echoed by Gersch (2001) and Rabiee, Sloper & Beresford (2005).

Aston and Lambert's (2010) study comprised 26 CYP, aged 8 to 15 years, participating in focus groups of 4 to 6, facilitated by an EP. CYP were recruited from 3 primary schools, 2 secondary schools and two specialist settings, and were selected by teachers to represent different abilities. EP focus groups comprised EPs, specialist teachers and trainee EPs, from one LA, with a total of 35 participants. Focus group participants discussed semi-structured questions; and that was subject to content analysis. Results from CYP suggested that they felt that attitudes, environment, systems and culture all needed addressing for them to be involved in making decisions. They also felt that society as a whole lacked interest in listening to them. Aston and Lambert (2010) concluded that EPs are in an ideal position to aid LAs in developing more CYP-supportive attitudes, environments, systems and cultures. A limitation of this study is that the criteria used by teachers to select participants is not known nor reported.

From the CYP-expressed views reported by Aston and Lambert (2010), we might ponder that if CYP have an expectation of feeling unable to contribute, and if their efforts are not supported, this may result in them perceiving that their role is not to offer views or to question. CYP then become disempowered and increasingly marginalised (Jelly *et al.,* 2000). Lewis (2002) asserts that using question and answer techniques can result in adults having greater power in a conversation.

In her paper, Lewis, (2002) provided an overview of key issues regarding interviewing CYP with learning difficulties in the context of research which are also highly relevant for practitioners such as EPs in their practice. She recommends that rather than

questions, where she asserts that an adult has the ‘upper hand’ (p 113), that practitioners instead use prompts comprising statements. She describes these as ‘less overtly powerful’ (p 113) and goes on to conclude that it is not possible to ‘perfectly’ (p 115) access CYP’s views. Practitioners can aim to reflect their views authentically, whilst concurrently acknowledging the limitations.

Lubel & Graves (2010) worked with a trainee EP to produce a booklet designed to address issues highlighted by Holey (1982) and Armstrong *et al* (1993; both discussed above). Specifically, the booklet explained, in a child friendly way, including use of cartoons, information for CYP about how EPs work and what they do with children. Lubel & Graves (2010) argue that it is critical that CYP have an understanding, before an EP visit, of the purpose of their interactions with the EP in ‘assessment’, hence preparation is very important – how, when and why are they giving their views. Yet EPs report, in contrast to this, that Educational Psychology Services (EPS) do not typically provide information on assessment, EP role etc., in advance of visits. Moreover, CYP are often seen as having become habituated to adults speaking on their behalf (Howarth, 2016).

Using Action Research, Howarth (2016) employed observation, focus groups, thematic analysis and semi-structured interviews with a sample of 13 CYP identified with communication difficulties, aged 6 to 10 years, in a mainstream school. The participants gave views of their SA experiences, which included use of a specially developed iPad app.

Howarth (2016) found that CYP misunderstood the questions EPs asked, lacked motivation to answer and confused the EP role with other professionals. Furthermore, they had difficulty recalling meeting the EP or what would happen afterwards. Howarth (2016) argues there is a strong role for both schools and families to support CYP to understand why an EP is seeing them, and that EPs can share clearer explanations of their purpose. After a visit, findings suggested CYP liked receiving accessible and explanatory summaries of their interactions with the EP.

Howarth (2016, p6) concludes:

> "unless EPs have clearly articulated what they are doing, to the key adults around the CYP, and to the CYP themselves, how can CYP offer comment on their assessment, their concerns and their hopes and dreams?"

However, due to the nature of this research being both small scale and exploratory, the generalisability of its findings are called into question as Howarth (2016) herself acknowledges.

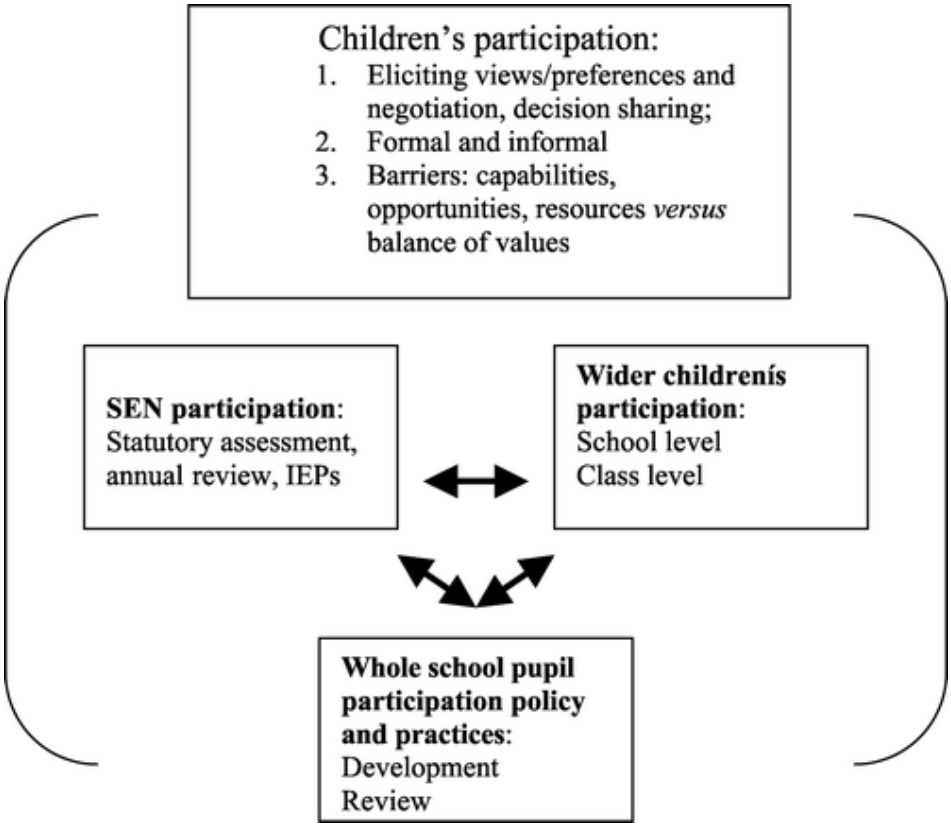
Woolfson *et al* (2006) explored CYP views in Scotland using focus groups. Results suggested that CYP wanted to be involved in decisions made about them, with the most important factor identified as individual choice regarding the nature of their involvement. Participants made suggestions for improving their experiences, with CYP expressing a preference to be more fully informed in advance of meeting EPs, alongside the use of language that is understandable to them. Woolfson *et al* (2006) concluded that these findings provide clear advice for EPs who seek CYP's views when making decisions affecting their SEN.

Norwich & Kelly (2006) found that most commonly respondents (teachers, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators) gained CYP views by talking. Differences in approaches were linked to an extent by LA policy and practices. Newton & Smillie (2020) similarly reported that EPs most often used discussion methods to elicit CYP views.

Perceived barriers to CYP involvement in Norwich & Kelly's (2006) study related to the challenging nature of eliciting views from very young children, and from CYP with the most significant difficulties in communication. Verbal methods of eliciting views were found to result in fewer views being offered by CYP. Hence the authors recommend the use of adapted and alternative methods for some CYP. Other barriers included the process being onerous for CYP, threatening to their self-esteem (with a focus on weaknesses), CYP's unwillingness to participate, CYP saying what they felt adults wanted them to say, the influence of peers and not recognising the same problems that adults did.

Norwich & Kelly (2006) devised a model that captures some of the key themes from their research (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 Model of children's participation (Norwich & Kelly, 2006, p 14)



The above model firstly highlights the complex nature of CYP participation. There is a range of influences, at different levels. Secondly, it outlines the role of both informal and formal processes of CYP participation, resting on building open and trusting relationships. Thirdly, it underlines interpretations of the limits of participation practices, with respondent's reporting a range of teacher, parent, school and child factors that served to restrict participation. Broadly, these comprised adult and child competencies and skills, insufficient opportunities or resources and inappropriate elicitation activities.

Thus, it would appear that prior to engaging with CYP, EPs routinely need to gather information, consider and reflect upon it and devise appropriate resources and activities suitable for each CYP. Yet Bloom *et al.,* (2020) argue that there is a lack of research on effective ways to enable CYP with cognition or communication needs to be involved (Clark, 2005, Marchant & Jones, 2003, Morris, 2003). Newton & Smillie (2020) echo this, with Welsh EP participants in their study reporting a need for creative

strategies, with some devising their own techniques, which the authors argued is suggestive of a lack of satisfaction with techniques available to them.

The current research will hopefully provide a vehicle for EPs in the author's LA to express their unique perceptions of enabling and restricting factors in securing CYP participation. It will be interesting to discover the extent to which policy and practices (Norwich & Kelly, 2006) are perceived in this respect. It is also anticipated that the study will shed light on the extent to which EP respondents in this EPS report similar views to EPs in similar research, or if views have shifted over time.

1.9 Research findings on CYP participation

Children's participation literature, in a range of professions includes concerns about a focus on 'voices' - this requires cognitive and communication ability. It excludes children who do not use speech (Dockerell, 2004); those who prefer to be silent (Homan, 2001; Lewis, 2010); or those whose views are difficult to ascertain due to complex needs (Kellett, 2008); or stage of development (Kanyal, 2014).

Hayes (2004) calls for innovation and creativity in devising tools to access the pupil voice in educational processes. Hayes's 2004 study narrates how she developed a CYP-friendly visual annual review structure for use at transition, designed to support those with limited language or understanding. It was positively evaluated by CYP, their parents and staff. In conclusion, Hayes proposes use of visual processes, where pupils with learning needs are supported to make their views known, participate in decision making and reflect their hopes and aspirations. Similar visually-based approaches were explored with the use of play and creative methods with early years children (Morris, 2006, Kanyal, 2014).

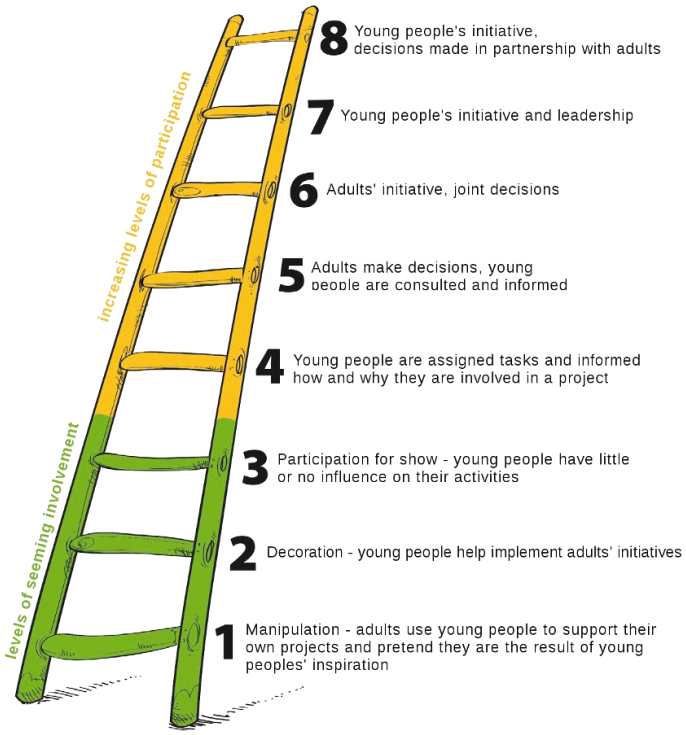
An adult's motive for CYP participation can be seen as key to understanding its value. EPs describe experiencing a dilemma regarding the extent to which their role is to guide CYP's views, or advocate them (Aston & Lambert, 2010, Ingram, 2013). To what extent are moves to participatory involvement driven by values of justice, democracy or community, as opposed to being driven by the need to fulfil policy and legislative requirements? Stewart (1995) suggests that in participation activities, CYP are constructed as clients and consumers rather than having equal worth and capacity to

make decisions. This results in tokenistic methods of CYP involvement, driven by the EHC process, seeking to capture the information the adult requires but not necessarily incorporating what is important from the CYP's perspective (Hart, 1992).

2.0 Models of participation

As can be seen from the previous discussion, CYP's participation is a complex process. Some researchers have proposed models to support practitioners. Hart (1992) devised a ladder of participation, now widely adopted (Fig. 3). The bottom three rungs were conceptualised as non-participation; rungs 4-8 as degrees of participation. Others have criticised the ladder because it implies a judgement that lower levels need to be built upon to reach higher, better levels (Hill, 2006). Klein (2003) argues these are best viewed as a continuum. Consequently, Hart's (1992) model can alternatively be seen represented as a circle of segments depicting fluidity, not hierarchy.

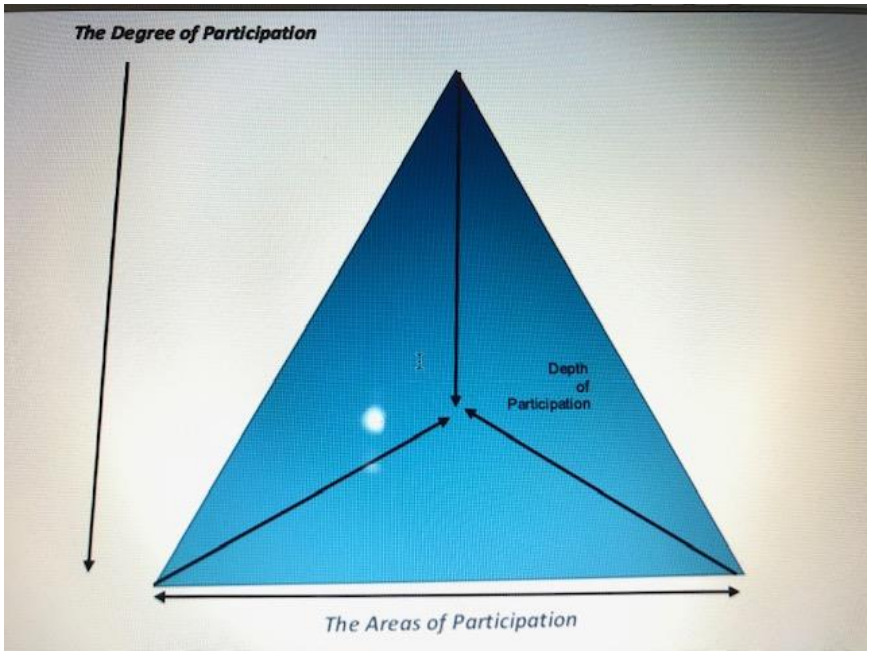
Figure 3 Hart's (1992) Ladder of participation.



The descriptions attached to the ladder imply a listening ethos comprises much more than the interaction of a child-adult dyad, instead involving a shifting in the perspectives of those involved to attempt to meaningfully involve CYP.

Fox (2017) devised models to facilitate EPs in developing their practice to represent CYP views in EP-written 'statutory psychological advice (SPA)', which may translate into an EHCP. After analysing Trainee EP (TEP) SPA reports, Fox (2017) conceptualised a pyramid of representation with reference to Hart's (1992) ladder. However, unlike the ladder, movement in the pyramid for greater participation is downwards, where there is a wide (triangular) base, synonymous with a strong foundation in understanding of the CYP. The pyramid has three dimensions (Fig. 4).

Figure 4 Fox (2017) Pyramid of Participation (p. 61)



Firstly, the CYP's **degree of participation** is represented by moving down the pyramid. This equates to how important the CYP's views are deemed in the EP SPA, and whether they are actioned. Secondly, **areas of participation**, where the EP gleans information from the CYP – this comprises the horizontal dimension. Thirdly, the **depth of participation**, represented as movement towards the centre of the pyramid. This comprises the strategies / techniques an EP uses to involve CYP. The current research is examining factors that contribute to the latter two areas.

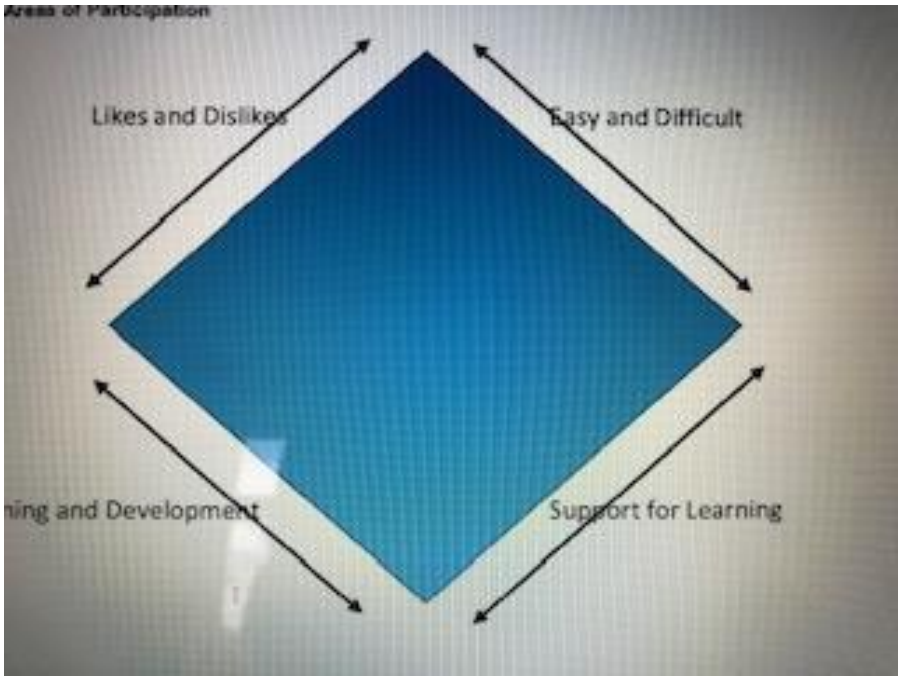
Fox (2017) suggests EPs promote participation by adopting practice to move in any one or all three of these directions. EPs can traverse the horizontal line, to enable participation in different aspects of a situation, as well as towards the centre by the use of techniques that foster richer and deeper information being elicited from CYP.

Fox's 2nd model reworks Hart's (1992) ladder to root it within the EHCP process (Fig. 5). For the **degree** of participation, how an EP represents CYP must move from interaction with the CYP (consultation/assessment), to their SPA report and finally be manifested in the EHCP, if agreed by decision makers. Levels 1 and 2 equate to a CYP having no involvement, with levels 3-6 showing increasing involvement, thus for level 6, the resultant EHCP is seen to directly advocate for the CYP.

Figure 5 Fox (2017) Degree of Participation (p. 62)

Fox's (2017) analysis of TEP SPA reports led him to argue that unless there is a large change in the culture of LA Children's Services, then a realistic expectation would be the CYP reaching level 4. The exception may be when an EP completes SPA with those aged 18-25, when their views might take centre stage. Detailing CYP's **area** of participation, Fox (2017) provides four possible areas EPs may consider (Fig. 6)

Figure 6 Fox (2017) Areas of Participation (p. 64)



Area 1 (dis/likes in school) equates to the lower levels of degree of participation; area 2 (easy/difficult) may relate to progress, what CYP feel does/n't work for them; area 3 (support for learning) – where the CYP receives support and area 4 (learning and development) – what may help them learn in the future. The latter requires CYP to understand what may be available.

Fox (2017) advises EPs aim to move to the centre of the pyramid (**depth of participation**), utilising their specific skills to help CYP who may have difficulties communicating. Others (e.g., Ingram, 2013, Gersch, Holgate, & Sigston, 1993) argue similarly that EPs have a wealth of expertise in exploring CYP's views. Fox (2017) delineates a range of approaches. For example, surface (observation), social (informal conversation), solution (structured conversation – solution-focused or problem-solving techniques, e.g. miracle question, how/how drawing) and finally psychological. This latter element taps into respect, authenticity and empathy, using discussions to access 'unseen' elements of the situation, such as more creative strategies or Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) in promoting working with CYP to co-construct advice.

2.1 Research on how EPs involve CYP and suggestions for 'best practice'

From the researcher's literature searches, it appears that the perspectives of CYP participating in SPA procedures is poorly represented, which was surprising. Alrai (2016) reflected on how she achieved 'co-construction' of SPA with one CYP, concluding that it is a professional judgement as to whether EPs wish to co-construct advice or not. When they do, she recommends EPs have clear boundaries to maintain their role, emphasising it as non-therapeutic. She concludes that listening carefully and being patient are helpful from her experiences. Yet it appears that this study has not been followed up or cited by others, thus it is difficult to judge how many EPs might be working in this manner.

Howarth (2016) suggests that *what* EPs ask of CYP is as important as *how* they ask. She explains that some EPs

> 'have been exploring the need to elicit the CYP's views on a *process* (Quicke, 2003, Gersch, 1996) as well as simply describing likes/dislikes' (2016, p. 6).

Cohen *et al* (2000) advocate that EPs may usefully establish trust with CYP, and discover ways to go beyond eliciting the responses that CYP *think* the EP wants to hear, pitching questions at appropriate levels. It is suggested by the researcher that the EP, with their knowledge of child development, for example, Blank's Levels (Blank, Rose & Berlin (1978a) is well-versed in making judgements for pitching questions. EP's interactive listening skills, which include paraphrasing, summarising and reflecting (Beaver, 2011) serve to acknowledge CYP's right to be listened to whilst also signifying how important their views are to the EP (Dickins, 2011).

Harding & Atkinson (2009) obtained two strands of data, firstly from a randomly selected 'children's views' section of EP transition reports of Year 9 pupils, which was then subjected to content analysis. Secondly, they completed focus groups with 6 out of the 7 EP's employed in one metropolitan LA, yielding information on a range of methods being used to elicit CYP views. Critiquing the study, there was no information provided on the number of reports that were selected for content analysis. Furthermore, the focus groups were conducted by one of the researchers, who was a

colleague of all of the participant EPs. Finally, the study appears rather small in scale and the generalisability of its results to different, e.g. rural LAs, could be considered questionable. Nevertheless, as one of only a few studies identified, the researcher felt it was useful to include in this literature review.

Harding & Atkinson (2009) reported that EPs used verbal discussions, procedures related to tasks e.g., Myself as a Learner (Burden, 1998) and self-report scales when working directly with CYP. Use of PCP by EPs was popular, e.g., 3 comments (Beaver, 1996), as well as solution-focussed methods and scaling questions. The choice of tool / strategy chosen was found to be dependent upon the age of the CYP, their needs, amount of EP time available and the type of interview being employed. EPs reported using questionnaires, self-report scales, sentence completion activities and skills profiles.

Harding & Atkinson (2009) found that sometimes EPs ascertained CYP views indirectly, by asking others, and at times, they employed use of SEN-specific methods. For example, Bear Cards (St Luke's Family Care, 1997) and All About Me (NSPCC, 2008). Todd (2003b) describes how using 'scaling to talk', around CYP's concerns, can usefully involve CYP in making decisions on their learning.

Howarth (2016) devised an App to inform CYP about the various aspects of the EP visit, which was subsequently positively rated by CYP. Thematic analysis of the data suggested that CYP, in line with the existing literature (Day, 2010, Lewis, Newton & Vials 2008), find visual, photographic, video and non-verbal supports useful to express their views. Howarth's (2016) study, she argued, adds to the literature on demonstrating the importance of the role of materials in facilitating CYP to participate.

Attributes of best practice demonstrated by EPs, revealed by thematic analysis in the Action Research study, (Howarth, 2016) include:

Reduction in power imbalance - use of togetherness language (e.g., 'we')

Demonstrating by modelling interest, respect and attentiveness

Sensitivity when interpreting CYP's non-verbal and verbal communications

Paraphrasing, repetition and cued use of gestures and visuals

Emphasising important information to increase CYP understanding and reduce memory load

Engaging in a CYP-led pace, which was explicitly acknowledged by clarifying and valuing the CYP's views

Jarrett & N'jie (2019) created a 'Pupil Voice Group' for an EPS, following a review of guidance and resources used. This led to the creation of a Pupil Voice Toolkit for various stages of education and a feedback form used with CYP following EP involvement, alongside the introduction of letters to CYP, both to introduce themselves prior to a visit, and for feeding back after visits. There does not appear to be a published evaluation of this at the time of writing (November, 2020).

Jarrett & N'jie detailed an expanded range of resources they had found useful in their work with CYP:

- Cards e.g., worries (Wilson & Sarl, 2014), big-question (smlworld.co.uk), subject picture (Language for Learning), deep speak/Bear cards (St Luke's Innovative Resources), therapeutic treasure deck (Dr Karen Treisman) & strengths,
- Use of cards for discussing support, e.g., grouping cards into like, dislike, ok,
- Conversation dice, small world people, puppets,
- Books (e.g., 'you choose'),
- EHC Needs assessment visuals (Council for Disabled Children),
- Say it in your own way resource (westsussexscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Say-it-your-own-way-CD-ROM-resources.pdf),
- One-page profiles, visual scaling tools,
- Talking mats,
- PCP tools (e.g., 'Let's Talk' Simon Burnham),
- Using Lego in an adapted 'draw the ideal school' task,
- Use of a range of Apps – 'Pictello, Our Story, Let's Talk1, Mind of My Own'.

Jarrett & N'jie (2019) created a table covering areas that an EP wants to explore and suggested possible tools that might be used, e.g., for determining CYP aspirations, relationship building, reflections on learning and social-emotional well-being. They concluded by underlining the importance of EPs incorporating views of CYP of all ages to inform provision within SPA reports and in EPs adapting practice in response to CYP feedback. The latter includes feedback on how the EPS has acted upon the views CYP had given.

Comparing the resources from 2009 (Harding & Atkinson) to Jarrett & N'jie's (2019) presentation, the researcher was struck by the progression made in terms of an increase in non-verbal and visual tools, resources and strategies. It will be informative to determine the extent to which EPs in the researcher's EPS use such resources. Another interesting area to explore is whether CYP are prepared by EPs or others prior to assessments, and if either or both introduction and feedback letters are used.

Bloom et al., (2020) report on a new tool, developed to promote CYP to describe experiences and participate in processes of decision making. 'Your Voice, Your Choice' (YVYC) uses predominantly visual and tactile materials, in line with research (e.g., Kellett, 2011) on the importance of using non-verbal, flexible and visual tools. This tool may need further evaluation before becoming more widely available to EPs.

Newton & Smillie (2020) completed research with 73 Welsh EPs and found that the most common strategies used to gather CYP were those based on discussion, asking parents, followed by solution-focussed and self-report scales. Therapeutic approaches, use of person-centred planning, indirect / task-related techniques and use of skills profiles were less frequently used. Only 2 EPs reported using picture-based approaches.

It *appears*, from the literature review, that various EPS's across the UK have developed different processes and use a diverse range of tools and approaches,

possibly suggesting a lack of uniformity in EP approaches. Yet at the same time, large scale, national research to detail current EP practices is noticeably missing.

2.2 How effective has the COP (2015) been in securing CYP involvement?

The involvement of CYP features strongly in the recent literature as being both an important but a challenging aspect of the EHC process (e.g., Newton & Smillie, 2020, Sales & Vincent, 2018, Redwood, 2015, Thom *et al.,* 2015). The Pathfinder Programme evaluation reported less than a third of parents felt their child had experienced active involvement in the process (Thom *et al.*, 2015), especially so for those aged above 17. This was thought to be related to the levels of need these older children presented with, impacting on how they understood and contributed to the process. Redwood's (2015) research highlighted a similar participation barrier. In EHC assessment meetings, only 21% of EHC advice givers perceived that they had used a CYP's preferred communication method.

Yet, in contrast, a mere two years later, a large survey initiated by the DfE (2017) reported that around two thirds of CYP and their parents were satisfied that their wishes were taken into account. Sales & Vincent (2018) sought to delve deeper and recruited a sample of school staff, EPs, medical professionals, parents and CYP aged between 10-17. There was agreement between professionals that the EHC assessment process was more person-centred than had been the case under the previous system. Curran, Mortimore & Riddell (2017) also concluded that CYP were being offered greater opportunities to have meaningful input into the EHC process and in developing plans, compared to the prior system. However, it was felt that there were further improvements that could be made, because policy changes had not consistently resulted in practices or attitudes of all professionals involved. Indeed, three professionals in the study stated that whilst CYP views might be heard, they were not always acted upon, and were thus perceived as tokenistic.

Five professionals and several parents felt that tools used with CYP to gather their views needed improving, to be more personalised and flexible for a CYP's developmental level, skills in communication and age. One EP felt there ought to be a variety of formats of forms such as 'All about me". It was pleasing to note that all CYP felt their school had supported them to give their views. However, they all felt that planning meetings could be improved by providing information in advance and opportunities to record their views beforehand.

Redwood (2015) concluded by asserting that in order to facilitate CYP participation, their authentic voice needs to be captured, and only by doing so can the EHC process meet COP requirements. She warns against using staff or parental advocates in place of CYP's own views, even when these are well intentioned. Sales & Vincent (2018) recommended that professionals take greater account of the communication preferences and needs of CYP when ascertaining their views.

2.3 Conclusions

It seems apparent that CYP participation is an area of EP practice which is evolving to reflect not only legislative demands but perhaps more crucially, EPs' own desire to transform their approaches to enable these to be more inclusive and accessible to CYP. Yet, as the researcher's brief foray into the ethical and philosophical aspects pertinent to practice illustrates, the area can be fraught with professional tensions between advocating for a child and interpreting their views.

Notwithstanding these dilemmas, EPs are shown in the reviewed literature as keen to explore and use an ever-increasing range of approaches and techniques to ensure CYP can participate. In the SPA process, EPs in the researcher's EPS have only two days to complete their assessment and produce the SPA report. With this in mind, the rationale for this research seeks to uncover a range of information that is relevant to EP practice and which may inform future developments. These include the

approaches / techniques EPs use with CYP at various Key Stages, enabling and restricting factors in fully involving CYP and assessing how processes and procedures enable them to take a person-centred approach.

Most tellingly perhaps might be the results linked to the final question: How might the process be different in the future to promote fuller involvement of children?

2.4 Research questions

1. How do EPs in one LA involve CYP in statutory assessments?

2. What do EPs in one Local Authority perceive are enabling and restricting factors in fully involving CYP in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?

3. How might the process be different in the future to promote fuller involvement of children?

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EMPIRICAL PAPER

An exploration of Educational Psychologists' (EPs') perceptions of enabling and restricting factors affecting children's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes.

2.6 Introduction

Historical & legislative influences on children and young people's (CYP) involvement in statutory assessment (SA) processes and outcomes

Educational psychologists (EPs) have a duty to work in a person-centred manner when completing statutory assessments (SA) with children (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Code of Practice, 2014, Children & Family Act, 2014). Recently, securing meaningful child involvement appears to have become more important in EPs' practice (Kay, 2019), as studies begin to explore methods and tools used to facilitate child involvement (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Newton & Smillie, 2020). Yet there appears a paucity of research examining which factors EPs identify as enabling or restricting in child involvement.

In the 1981 Education Act (DfES), there was no guidance issued to EPs on the level of participation CYP be afforded. At the time, much of the literature seems to suggest that a CYP's perceived capability to *give* views was largely determined on their age and maturity, which was open to interpretation. Research bears this out: Knight & Oliver (2007) in their study of looked after children and the role of self-advocacy, explain how societally-held perceptions of children with disabilities or Special Educational Needs (SEN) typified them as being vulnerable, passive and needing protection. CYP with SEN were excluded from decision-making processes regarding educational provision (Kliene, 2003).

The rationale for CYP's involvement has been strengthened since the UK's 1991 ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Article 12 therein detailed that CYP possess the right to express their views and that these be given appropriate weight in areas that affect them, whilst Article 13

specified CYP's right to freely express themselves. The latter includes the right to have access to information in ways that enable CYP to understand. Finally, Article 17 prompts governments to give CYP access to a wide range of materials / information.

Subsequently, the Children & Family Act (CFA: Department for Education DfE, Department of Health, DoH, 2014) placed responsibilities on Local Authorities (LA) to ensure that children are involved in decisions that affect their lives. The resulting legislative framework is arguably one of many factors that have spurred EPs to create, utilise, modify, develop and disseminate new approaches to more fully involve CYP (Gersch & Lipscomb, 2012).

At the time of writing, there is a legal duty placed upon EPs to have regard for information on the views of CYP which is relevant to their role (CFA, DfES/DoH, 2014). The CFA outlines principles underpinning guidance and legislation (DfE, 2015, section 19) in the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (COP), especially in relation to Education & Health Care Plans (EHCP, DfE, 2014, p. 147-149).

The COP (DfE & DoH, 2015) can be usefully compared with the previous COP (DfES, 2001) to highlight how the involvement of CYP has been strengthened.

Table 1 - differences between previous and current COP, adapted from Sales & Vincent (2018, p324).

Code of Practice	**Previous (DfES, 2001)**	**Current (DfE, 2015)**
Name of the formal plan for CYP with complex SEN	Statement of SEN	Education, Health and Care Plan
Involvement of CYP and their families	Recommended	Necessary
Gaining the views of CYP and their families	Recommended	Necessary
Identifying & recording CYP's aspirations	Recommended	Necessary

Identifying and recording defined outcomes for CYP	Recommended	Necessary

The principles stated in the CFA and COP aim to support the participation of CYP in decision-making. Fox (2017) describes how the COP principles outline EPs' responsibilities to listen to CYP, enabling them to be involved in decisions around their SEN.

The COP (DfE, 2015) supports children's participation through person-centred approaches (DfE, 2014,). The term 'person-centred' refers to a range of definitions and approaches. The COP (2015) describes how person-centred working might be achieved. Below is the researcher's understanding of this, with italics added to emphasise parts deemed especially pertinent to this study:

- There is a focus on the CYP as an *individual*;
- Professionals/ EPs *enable* CYP to *express* their views, wishes and feelings;
- Professionals/ EPs *enable* CYP to *be part of* the decision-making process;
- Information is *made accessible* and easy for CYP to *understand*;
- Professionals/ EPs enable the CYP, and those that know them well, to *express what they have done*, their interests and *describe outcomes* sought for the future;
- EPs *personalise* support to the *needs of the individual*; they facilitate assessments to minimise demands on families.

Evaluating how helpful the COP has been, Sales & Vincent (2018) reported agreement between professionals that the EHC assessment process was more person-centred than under the previous COP. Curran *et al.* (2017) also concluded that CYP were being offered greater opportunities to have meaningful input into the EHC process and in developing plans, compared to the prior system.

2.7 Definition of involvement and participation

Researchers use diverse terms, for example, Kay (2019) uses “participation” because “voice” implies a CYP is able to vocalise their perspectives. “Involvement”, on the other hand, suggests an enhanced sense of agency in decision-making.

This study uses a definition of participation (or involvement) adopted by The Office of the Children’s Commissioner; The Children’s Rights Alliance for England (CRAE); The National Children’s Bureau; The National Participation Forum and Participation Works, as written in their summary report ‘Children’s participation in decision making’ (Davey *et al*., 2010):

> “Participation is a process where someone influences decisions about their lives, and this leads to change.” (Treseder,1997).

This was chosen because of its interest in whether CYP can freely express themselves, if their views influence decisions and if that results in change.

Clark & Williams (2008) devised a useful representation of participation cycles, below.

Figure 1 Clark & Williams (2008) cycles of participation, adapted from Clark and Williams (2008, p.9)

The views of CYP can be understood as a participation cycle of initiation, continuation and informing of subsequent participation approaches. This representation will be returned to in the discussion section, below, and in Bridging and Reflective chapter.

2.8 Approaches used by EPs when involving CYP

Relatively few studies have explicitly investigated EPs' approaches. The literature suggests verbal methods are most commonly used by EPs. Harding & Atkinson (2009) reported that EPs used verbal discussions, procedures related to tasks and self-report scales when working directly with CYP. Use of Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) by EPs was popular, as well as solution-focussed methods and scaling questions. Their findings suggest that the choice of EPs' tool / strategy was dependent upon the age of the CYP, their needs, amount of EP time available and the type of interview being employed. EPs reported using questionnaires, self-report scales, sentence completion activities and skills profiles.

Harding & Atkinson (2009) found that sometimes EPs ascertained CYP views indirectly, by asking others, and at times, they employed use of SEN-specific methods. For example, Bear Cards (a set of cards that depict a wide range of feelings: St Luke's Family Care, 1997).

Newton & Smillie (2020) found that the most common strategies EPs used to gather CYP were those based on discussion, asking parents, followed by solution-focussed and self-report scales. Therapeutic approaches, use of person-centred planning, indirect / task-related techniques and use of skills profiles were less frequently used. Only 2 EPs reported using picture-based approaches. The literature is beginning to explore the usefulness of resources that can support verbal methods (Bloom, Critten, Johnson & Woods, 2020a).

2.9 Enabling factors to CYP involvement

Lewis (2002) provided an overview of key issues regarding interviewing CYP with learning difficulties in the context of research, which, she argues, are also highly relevant for practitioners such as EPs' practice. She recommends that rather than questions, where she asserts that an adult has the 'upper hand' (p 113), that

practitioners instead use prompts comprising statements. She describes these as ‘less overtly powerful’ (p 113).

Lubel & Graves (2010) produced a booklet used to communicate with CYP. It explained, in a child friendly way, with the use of cartoons, how EPs work and what they do with children. The authors argue that it is critical that CYP have an understanding, *before* an EP visit, of the purpose of their interactions with the EP in ‘assessment’, hence preparation is very important – how, when and why are they giving their views. Yet EPs report, in contrast to this, that Educational Psychology Services (EPS) do not typically provide information on assessment, EP role etc., in advance of visits.

Attributes of best practice demonstrated by EPs, revealed by thematic analysis in an Action Research study, (Howarth, 2016) include:

Reduction in power imbalance - use of togetherness language (e.g. ‘we’)

Demonstrating by modelling interest, respect and attentiveness

Sensitivity when interpreting CYP’s non-verbal and verbal communications

Paraphrasing, repetition and cued use of gestures and visuals

Emphasising important information to increase CYP understanding and reduce memory load

Engaging in a CYP-led pace, which was explicitly acknowledged by clarifying and valuing the CYP’s views

3.0 Restrictive factors to CYP involvement

Aston and Lambert (2010) investigated how prepared CYP are for meeting an EP. They reported concerns that the views of CYP with communication disorders were not being sought, resulting in them being both unprepared and unpractised in expressing their views. A similar lack of preparation was echoed by Gersch (2001) and Rabiee, Sloper & Beresford (2005).

Howarth (2016) found that CYP misunderstood the questions EPs asked, lacked motivation to answer and confused the EP role with other professionals. Franklin (2013) highlights several barriers, including a paucity of suitable methods of communication (Marchant & Jones, 2003). Moreover, EPs report having restricted time available to work with CYP, alongside insufficient opportunities to promote involvement processes (Franklin, 2013, Morris, 2003).

Perceived barriers to CYP involvement in Norwich & Kelly's (2006) study were verbal methods, which yielded fewer views from CYP, hence the authors recommend the use of adapted and alternative communication methods for some CYP. Other barriers included the process being onerous for CYP, threatening to their self-esteem (with a focus on weaknesses), CYP's unwillingness to participate and CYP saying what they felt adults wanted them to say.

Bloom, Critten, Johnson & Wood (2020b) argue that there exists a large gap between policy guidelines such as the COP (2014) and the reality of EP practice, especially for CYP with disabilities, difficulties with communication or cognitive needs. Several barriers are identified: a lack of information, time and methods to effectively promote participation, adults' holding negative views of CYP's capabilities and insufficient opportunities to help professionals acquire the requisite skills. Newton & Smillie (2020) reported that Welsh EPs voiced a need for creative strategies, with some devising their own techniques, which the authors argued is suggestive of a lack of satisfaction with the techniques available to them.

3.1 How might the process be different to promote CYP involvement?

Howarth contends that there is a strong role for both schools and families to support CYP to understand why an EP is seeing them, and that EPs can share clearer explanations of their purpose. After a visit, Howarth's findings suggested CYP liked receiving accessible and explanatory summaries of their interactions with the EP. Hayes (2004) proposes use of visual processes, where pupils with learning needs are supported to make their views known, participate in decision making and reflect their hopes and aspirations.

Jarrett & N'jie (2019) detailed an expanded range of resources they had found useful in their work with CYP:

- Cards e.g. worries (Wilson & Sarl, 2014), big-question (smlworld.co.uk), subject picture (Language for Learning), deep speak/Bear cards (St Luke's Innovative Resources), therapeutic treasure deck (Dr Karen Treisman) & strengths,
- Use of cards for discussing support, e.g. grouping cards into like, dislike, ok,
- Conversation dice, small world people, puppets,
- Books (e.g. 'you choose'),
- EHC Needs assessment visuals (Council for Disabled Children),
- Say it in your own way resource (westsussexscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Say-it-your-own-way-CD-ROM-resources.pdf),
- One-page profiles, visual scaling tools,
- Talking mats,
- PCP tools (e.g. 'Let's Talk' Simon Burnham),
- Using Lego in an adapted 'draw the ideal school' task,
- Use of a range of Apps – 'Pictello, Our Story, Let's Talk1, Mind of My Own'.

Jarrett & N'jie (2019) created a 'Pupil Voice Group' for an EPS, following a review of guidance and resources used. This led to the creation of a Pupil Voice Toolkit for various stages of education and a feedback form used with CYP following EP involvement, alongside the routine use of letters to CYP, both to introduce themselves prior to a visit, and for feeding back after visits. To summarise, there now exists a wide range of resources and guidance to support EP practice in meaningfully and authentically involving CYP.

3.2 Rationale, research aims and epistemological foundation

There appears a paucity of research examining what factors EPs identify as enabling or restricting in CYP involvement and no studies appear to explicitly explore, with EPs, what they feel needs to be changed to secure greater CYP involvement. Moreover, relatively few studies have explicitly investigated EPs' approaches. Studies have

instead tended to focus on how EPs interpret and represent CYP views (e.g. Ingram, 2013).

Given the importance of this area and the lack of research therein, this study aims to generate new knowledge, via exploring EP perceptions and practices in involving CYP in SA processes and outcomes, including factors EPs perceive as enabling and restricting. In this LA it was deemed important to research how EPs are not just gathering CYP views but also involving them in the SA process. Moreover, there was an impetus to explore the range of approaches, resources and tools EPs use to facilitate CYP in being involved and communicating, which could lead to the development of new guidance and tools. In addition, the LA's Children's Services strategic plan had important bearings on the development of this research. It demonstrates the LA's commitment to using person-centred tools and implementing SEND reforms from the Children & Families Act. A secondary aim is therefore to provide data for EPs in the service with a view to improve practice at an organisational level.

3.3 Research questions (RQs)

1. How do EPs in one LA involve CYP in statutory assessments (SA)?

2. What do EPs in one Local Authority perceive are enabling and restricting factors in fully involving CYP in SA processes and outcomes?

3. How might the process be different in the future to promote fuller involvement of children?

The research is conducted in a mixed method but predominantly qualitative paradigm, comprising an initial survey questionnaire, followed with semi-structured interviews. These two measures were purposefully developed for the study. A pilot of the survey was not possible: there was a need to align the study's timeframe with the constraints of a busy professional service, in the context of COVID-19 related pressures and, moreover, to refrain from overburdening participants. Data from two questions in the survey explored EPs' practice in involving CYP by age group (from Key Stage 0 to above Key Stage 5), thus the approaches EP's used in doing so comprised the small quantitative strand of the study.

Robson (2002) outlines the qualitative paradigm as the constellation of values and beliefs on the nature of reality (ontological position) and the various forms that knowledge can take and might be created (epistemological position). The critical realist paradigm is felt to most comfortably represent the researcher's values by reflecting a recognition that knowledge and understanding are influenced by the researcher being part of the process. The researcher thus accepts that there may exist different versions of reality, even for the same EP, and these are tied to the context where they occurred. Silverman's (2000) writings usefully summarise the researcher's stance: the analysis of words, acknowledging the role of context, with an interest in meanings whilst concurrently recognising the researcher's subjective role.

Critical realism thus leads to the researcher accepting that EPs' real or knowable worlds reside behind socially located and subjective knowledge that is gathered in the study. The researcher can therefore only hope to partially access this knowledge. The researcher's view is that there is a degree of 'authentic' reality in existence, and that this will produce knowledge (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 1997). Thematic Analysis (TA) sits comfortably with this ontological assumption (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Epistemologically, critical realism and contextualism (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1994, Pepper 1942) describe the researcher's leaning, whereby knowledge emerges from various contexts and will reflect the researcher's position. Thus, knowledge generated will be local, situated and hence be provisional (Tebes, 2005). The researcher will be assuming a straightforward, generally unidirectional relationship exists between meaning, experience and language, whereby EPs' language reflects and allows them to speak about meanings and experiences (Potter & Weatherell, 1987, Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995).

3.4 Rationale for the research design

The research design was chosen to best answer the research questions from a critical realist perspective. There are some similarities with Newton & Smillie's (2020) study, in that the study combines quantitative and qualitative strands, albeit on a much smaller scale. The ontological and epistemological issues related to the critical realist paradigm comfortably leads to collecting data from survey questionnaires and

interviews. Data was subsequently analysed qualitatively using TA; latent and inductive coding. Quantitative analysis comprised frequencies of approaches used by EPs for different age groups. The data collection and analysis methods were deemed suitable because they facilitated participants to provide accounts of their experiences and perceptions of enabling / restricting factors. Moreover, coding enabled themes to result from the data in a 'bottom up' manner. This methodology means that themes link strongly to the data (Patton, 1990).

TA was chosen over a phenomenological approach so as to move beyond any particular detail and because it allows the researcher to develop each stage of analysis across the entire dataset. Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) would have focused instead on how EPs made sense of their experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) which were not the focus in this study. Instead, this study concentrates on EPs' practices in involving CYP, their perceptions of enabling and restricting factors and an exploration of how the process might be altered to achieve greater CYP participation.

3.5 Methodological Procedures: Research Participants & sampling

Purposive sampling (homogenous) was utilised: research questions are specific to the characteristics of the EP group, which can then be examined in detail.

There are ongoing discussions on requirements for sample sizes when using TA.

Fugard & Potts (2015) argued that guides for sample size (2 – 400+) lack detail on how researchers should choose a value. Braun & Clarke (2016) responded by contending that researchers can take a flexible approach, and that larger sample sizes do not necessarily translate to improved results. Indeed, they describe how larger samples may lead to difficulties in capturing the nuances within data. Braun & Clarke (2016) conclude that it is more important to develop a clear conceptualisation of what themes represent, i.e., why and how they are treated as significant, over and above considering sample size.

Sandelowski (1995) recommends samples be of sufficient size to promote a rich, textured understanding. Likewise, Morse (2000) suggests that if participants are

providing large amounts of meaningful data, then fewer participants are required. With these in mind, the researcher arrived at a minimum sample size of 6, which was felt to be an important pragmatic consideration. This factor is in keeping with other researchers, e.g. Vasileiou *et al* (2018), who found that researchers cited constraints in research time, project manageability and accessing participants all being used to justify sample sizes. There is potential disadvantage in this study's sampling approach, i.e., it might be prone to research bias, created by the researcher's judgement, alongside the representativeness of the small sample, theoretically, analytically and for logical generalisations.

3.6 Recruitment of EP participants

Inclusion criteria: EPs of all grades, employed by the researcher's LA. Exclusion criteria: associate / locum EPs, specialist teachers, Trainee EPs. It was hoped that these would result in a diverse range of perspectives and maximum heterogeneity sampling (Fassinger, 2005).

EPs within the researcher's LA were invited to participate in the survey by email (appendix A: EP information letters). There was an opt in to participate in the interview. Initially, 3 EPs replied, with 2 opting in for the interview. A second email was sent, which yielded 3 additional survey responses and one for interview. The final sample comprised 6 EPs (survey), with 4 of these completing a telephone interview. Each EP signed a consent form (appendix A) before being emailed the survey.

Completed surveys were received in June 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, semi-structured interviews were completed by phone, between 1-2 days of the survey being received, on a date and time of each EP's choosing. One was re-scheduled at short notice.

Interview schedules were loosely based upon the research questions and aimed at providing respondents with space, time and opportunities to speak. Appendix B details prompting questions used during the interviews.

Before each interview, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw. The researcher asked for permission to use audio recording and notified participants when this was initiated. The researcher took a gently-enquiring, non-judgemental position.

3.7 Methods of qualitative data analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher, retaining paralinguistic features. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage model of TA provided the framework for the data analysis.

1. **Familiarisation with the data**

During transcription, the researcher noted initial ideas apparent in the data. For the surveys, the researcher read each survey several times to promote familiarisation. A research diary was useful to record initial ideas about the data.

2. **Generating initial codes**

The researcher studied units of data (excerpts of language) from the surveys / transcripts. The researcher chose 'complete coding' over 'selective coding'. Thus, rather than looking for certain instances, the researcher identified 'anything and everything' of relevance or interest to answering the research questions, over the whole dataset (Braun & Clark 2013).

The data analysis generated 'researcher-derived' *latent* codes, in the researcher's own language, derived from an analysis of the units of data being coded (Braun and Clark, 2013).

The epistemological gap between realist and idealist paradigms is noteworthy when linked to coding for latent or semantic meanings, yet the divide is not absolute. Indeed, it depends on the intentions of the research. Braun and Clarke (2013) recognise the overlap in coding types, and this is true for the current research. The rationale for selecting a latent coding of data was to yield a rich overall analysis to answer the research questions, without entirely discounting the more literal descriptions of tools and approaches reported by EPs.

Moreover, inductive coding was appropriate for this research because it is exploratory and is not seeking to draw out data relating to particular pre-existing theoretical frameworks. It provides greater opportunity for the 'unexpected' to be revealed from the data. Notwithstanding these, it is important that the researcher acknowledges that

there were research questions '*a priori'*, before the study was conducted, resulting in the researcher possessing pre-existing concepts of the analysis.

During the second coding, codes were refined, simultaneously maintaining subtleties that were relevant in addressing research questions. Codes that overlapped were not always subsumed. 'Overlap' was employed to identify patterns (candidate themes) at later stages of the analysis. Codes comprised short phrases capturing the essence of why the unit of data was potentially interesting.

3. **Searching for themes**

Codes were studied and organised to identify broader patterns. For each research question, the researcher cut out codes and arranged these into candidate themes. Codes were organised and reorganised into themes that were deemed to correspond to a central organising concept. Themes were described to illustrate meaningful concepts related to the research questions. Themes were generated according to the standard of saliency (Buetow, 2010). This spurred the researcher to seek codes and data that were *significant* in answering the research questions.

4. **Reviewing themes**

This stage comprised the refinement of candidate themes.

- Reviewing coded data extracts: the researcher re-read all data to evaluate the extent to which they sat with the central organising concept and pattern described by each theme. See appendix C for an example of how data was collated under codes and themes.
- A second re-reading of the entire un-coded dataset was completed to evaluate how well the candidate themes encapsulated a meaning of the dataset that held 'face validity' for the researcher *vis-a-vis* the research questions.
- The thematic maps for the research questions were produced.

5. **Defining themes**

The researcher detailed an analysis of themes, using selected quotations to support concepts of themes as representative of the data.

6. **Producing the report**

The researcher presented the analytic narrative and thematic map to answer the research questions.

3.8 Reliability and validity

To check for trustworthiness, Lincoln & Guba's (1989) Evaluative Criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability) were applied. Credibility was enabled by lengthy engagement with the research through the phases of data collection and analysis. 'Persistent observation' of data alongside the researcher's reflexivity contributed. Additional credibility was gleaned from research supervision. To promote transferability, the researcher sought a 'thick description' of data. Finally, 'confirmability' was ensured via an audit trail, described below (Halpern, 1983).

- All raw data were retained.
- Data analyses were kept. Appendix C provides an example of how data were collated under corresponding codes and themes.
- Data reconstruction and synthesis products were detailed, including structure of categories (themes, definitions, and relationships). Please see Appendix D. Findings were presented in the analytic narrative along with the final thematic maps (Figures 1-3).
- The research proposal, ethical approval letter (Appendix E) and researcher reflective notes were retained.
- Instrument development information was kept, - the surveys (Appendix F).

Systematic reflexivity also aided confirmability, e.g. the researcher's acknowledgement of herself within the process alongside the effects of this on the findings generated and knowledge produced. Please see the reflective and bridging chapter for more detail.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The University of East Anglia School of Education Ethics Committee approved the research (Appendix E). Approval was also sought from the LA in which the research was conducted.

Fox and Rendall (2002) report some important considerations on the importance of recognising that ethical principles for research are themselves socially constructed. Thus, a particular ethical position can only be meaningful in a specific context. Relevant to this context is the feelings and meanings that participants possess about the research. The authors recommend researchers ruminate upon the boundaries between EPs' practice and research, including planning ahead for start and end points, as experienced by participants. In this study, start and end points were contracted verbally with participants, by inclusion of a description of what interviews aimed to achieve. Endings were underlined by clear explanations regarding what would be done with their data.

The British Psychological Society (2014) Code of Human Research Ethics outlines how researchers need to consider respect for the dignity and autonomy of participants, social responsibility and scientific value, whilst maximising benefit and minimising harm. In this study, 'Respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons' was attained via gaining informed consent. All participants were reminded of their right to withdraw. Moreover, the researcher discussed with participants how survey and interview data would be anonymous, with any possible identifying information removed or substituted. The data for the research was stored securely using a password protected PC, which only the researcher had access to.

The researcher met the standard of 'scientific value' by using Lincoln and Guba's (1989) Evaluative Criteria. Moreover, Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework was applied. The creation of an audit trail (Halpern, 1983) also contributed. Meeting the standard of 'social responsibility' was facilitated by the researcher taking a curious, non-judgemental and empathetic stance during interviews. The output of the research, in terms of what EPs feel may help CYP be more actively involved, and how processes might be altered to enable this, also contribute in this area.

4.0 Results: Quantitative: RQ1: How do EPs in one LA involve CYP in SA?

Table 2 Frequencies of how EP participants involve CYP at each Key Stage

KS0	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4	KS5	Above KS5
Play (3)	Play-based activity (2)	Observation (4)	Observation (3)	Pupil interviews (6)	Pupil interviews (6)	Pupil interviews (6)
Observation (3)	Observation (4)	Direct assessment (1)	Direct assessment (1)	Standardised self-report pupil checklists (2)	Direct assessment (1)	Standardised self-report pupil checklists (2)
Ask parents/setting staff (1)	Direct assessment (1)	Verbal methods (4)	Verbal methods (6)	Direct assessment (1)	Standardised self-report pupil checklists (2)	PCR meetings (1)
Show child pictures (1)	Verbal methods (4)	Scaling questions (1)	'I am' statements (1)	Sentence completion activities (1)	Scaling questions (1)	Scaling questions (1)
Drawing (2)	A child-friendly letter, mainly pictures, as follow up (1)	Selection of symbols (1)	Scaling questions (1)	Scaling questions (1)	PCR meetings (1)	drawing (1)
Simple verbal questions (1)	Show child pictures (1)	Show child pictures (1)	Standardised self-report pupil checklists (2)	PCR meetings (1)	Drawing (1)	A child-friendly letter, as follow up (1)
Makaton (1)	Drawing methods (2)	Sentence completion activities (2)	Sentence completion activities (1)	Drawing (1)	A YP-friendly letter, as follow up (1)	
Puppets (1)	Makaton (1)	PCR meetings (1)	PCR meetings (1)	Observation (1)		
Bubbles & toys (1)		A child-friendly letter, a mixture of pictures and text, as follow up (1)	A child-friendly letter, as follow up (1)	Standardised pupil checklists (2)		
A child-friendly letter, mainly pictures, as follow up (1)				A child-friendly letter, as follow up (1)		

(**Note**: PCR in the above table refers to a Person-Centred Review meeting.)

For **KS0**, observation / play were the most mentioned ways EPs involved children. Play was said to facilitate conversations about friends, school and tricky or easy things. Where appropriate, simple questions were asked, e.g. "what things do you like/not like to do at school?" (EP3). EPs used pictures, drawing, toys and puppets less commonly. One EP utilised sign language. At **KS1**, EPs mostly involved children with observation,

verbal and play-based methods. Less commonly, EPs used drawing, direct assessment and pictures. One EP utilised sign language.

For **KS2**, observation / verbal methods were most commonly reported, followed by the use of sentence completion activities. Less commonly, EPs used Scaling questions, symbols, direct assessment, pictures, or PCR meetings. Verbal methods for KS2 and above typically comprised discussions and questioning to seek CYP views on relevant issues and their aspirations. EPs also asked about CYP's perceptions of their attainment, transition and aspirations out of school.

KS3 children were most commonly involved through verbal methods, observation, and standardised self-report checklists. At KS4-5 and above, pupil interviews were most commonly used, alongside standardised self-report checklists. Direct assessment, scaling questions, drawing, and PCR meetings were less frequently used.

For **KS3 and above**, discussions or pupil interview techniques covered CYP perceptions of strengths and weaknesses, social interactions and relationships with peers/adults. For KS4 and above, discussions included aspirations and perceptions of the skills CYP felt they needed and how they could be supported to achieve these.

For **KS5 and above**, in addition, discussions aimed to identify areas that YP would like to change, and establishing levels of independence in the wider community, in relation to safe and healthy relationships.

For **all KS**, one EP routinely sent letters, including photographs and pictures, prior to meeting CYP, and follow up feedback letters. One EP sent social story letters to CYP in advance of home visits or where there was an identified need.

Table 3: Frequencies of approaches used by EP participants

Approach	**N**
Verbal	6
Standardised pupil checklists	3
Observation	4
Scaling questions	3
Drawing / art based	2
Play / play based	2
Asking adults who know CYP well	2
Puppets	3
Sentence completion activities	1
Direct standardised assessment	1
Show CYP pictures/symbols	1
Sign language	1
Walk and talk with CYP	1

Table 4: Frequencies of named tools / resources used by EP participants

Tool / resource	N
BAS3	1
BPVS	1
WIAT3	1
Ideal Self / Ideal School	3
PCP	3
Salmon lines	2
Myself as a Learner	1
All About Me	1
Multi Element Plan / externalisation cards	1
Cue Cards	1
Tree of Life	2
Butler Self Profile	1
'I am' statements	1
My Life in School	1
Blob Tree / Blob Cards	2
One Page Profile	1
PCR Meeting	1
CYP-friendly pre-meeting and feedback/follow up letters	1
Art / craft / natural objects	2
One Page Profile	1
PCR elicitation activities – visual, e.g. magic wand, good /bad day.	1
Solution focused	1
Motivational interviewing	1
Lego	1
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire	1
Beck Inventory	3
Resilience Scales	1
Kinetic Family Drawing	2
Games	1
Emotional Literacy Scales	2

EPs reported 30 different approaches/tools in the survey and interviews. Some appear to be used more widely with younger children, e.g. observation for KS3 and below, play for KS0-1 and pupil interviews for KS4 and above. Other approaches/tools appear to be more suitable across all key stages, e.g. drawing, direct standardised assessment, scaling and PCP. In interviews, EPs emphasised that their approaches

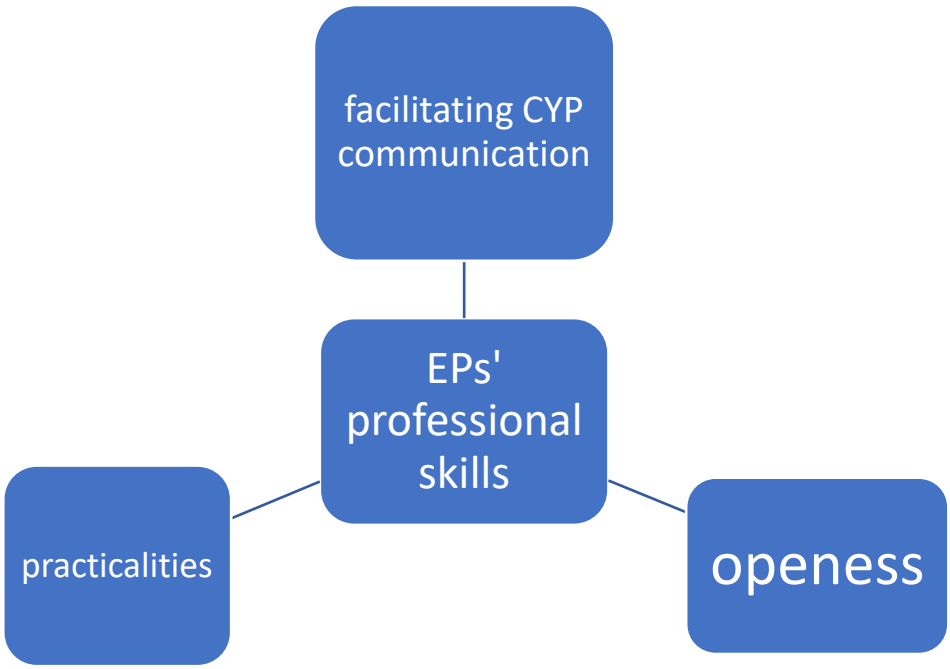
are “not a one size fits all”. The approaches/tools/strategies used were tailored to each CYP, e.g. where a CYP has a diagnosis of ASD, EP’s spoke of using “ASD friendly tools and approaches”, including sending social stories to explain their visit.

EPs used a range of practical tools, including puppets, toys, pictures, visual resources and drawing, to begin the process of engaging with CYP. EP4 explained “these visuals .. are really good at rapport building… with blob cards … you can get a lot of information … having a selection, turning them over, you can use them in a lot of different ways”. EP1 stated that “drawing can be a way of getting CYP to get involved” whilst EP4 said using visuals can be “an ice breaker”. These tools were felt to be “a bit less threatening than cognitive assessments” (EP1). Using puppets were described by EP4; “I find that they help, some (CYP) will talk to a puppet, they’ll be more open in their responses to a puppet than face to face with this strange person”.

4.1 Qualitative results

RQ2: What do EPs in one LA perceive are enabling and restricting factors in fully involving CYP in SA processes and outcomes?

Four *enabling* factors were identified: Figure 7



***Openness*:** CYP involvement is facilitated when they understand the SA process / EP role, are informed (prepared) in advance and when the EP has opportunities to check information with CYP.

"when I'm going in, I'll send a child-friendly information sheet" (EP5)

"To try to give clarity about the process the child is involved in" (EP3)

"Open curiosity about them- valuing their comments and checking if there is a shared meaning." (EP4)

***EPs' professional skills*:** CYP involvement was perceived to be facilitated by EPs' skills e.g. pre-reflecting on how to involve CYP, demonstrating curiosity, 'attunement' and by supporting CYP to feel confident to communicate. This theme relates to the importance of establishing trust, and by practicing in a manner so as to equalise power. Use of Person-Centred meetings was mentioned by three EPs as being a CYP-friendly method of promoting active participation and improving CYP's agency.

"But perhaps more than anything, just being attuned to the CYP" (EP1)

"it's that sort of collaborative nature" (EP4)

"I think to get the child's voice, we need to do (psychology) *with them"* (EP4)

"Establishing feeling of safety/trust/rapport" (EP3)

"I feel that the process at best (using a PCR) can be very person-centred" (EP2)

"Person-centred planning – that's what EPs do!" (EP1)

***Facilitating communication*:** EPs perceived that to enable CYP involvement, their preferred methods of communication, including the use of appropriate tools and often comprising visuals, needed to be established and utilised.

"sometimes, I think visuals facilitate the conversation more… also helps with them processing the information" EP4

"There are so many lovely tools out there" EP6.

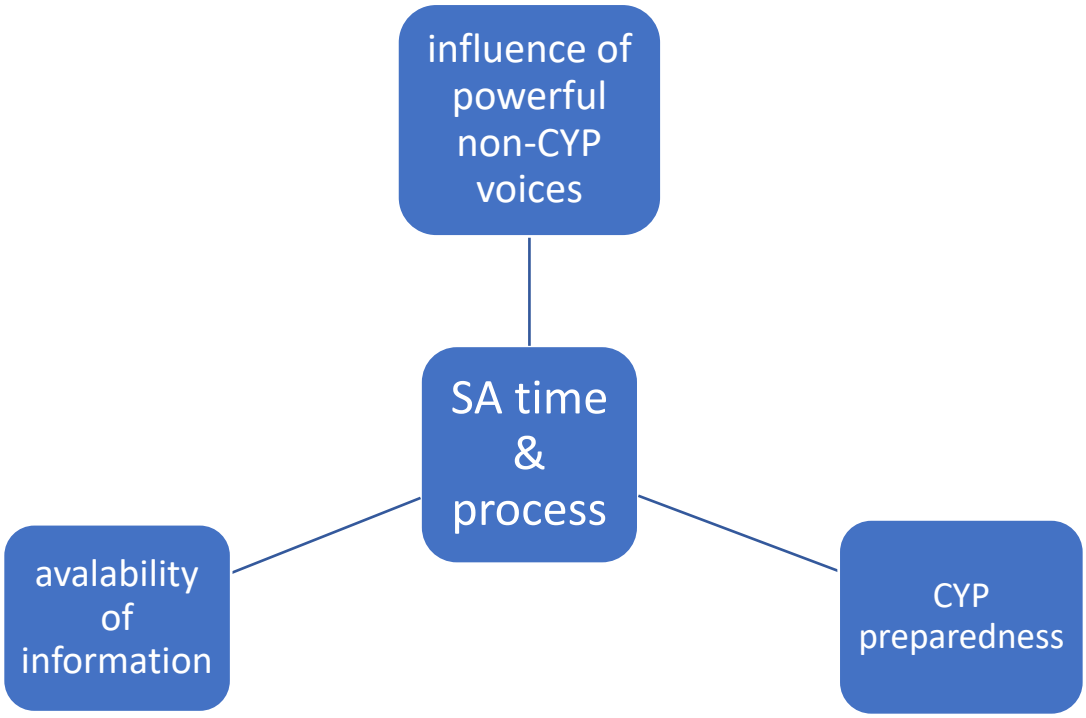
"Getting down to the young child's level" (EP3)

"a skilfully managed person-centred meeting (PCR) of all involved is preferable to a sequential (talking to teacher, talking to parent, work with child) process, and to a written report." (EP3)

Practicalities: EPs' perceptions centred on environment-specific variables, such as having sufficient time to work with CYP, a carefully timed visit, in an environment that the CYP feels safe in.

> "where that child has felt safe" (EP1)
>
> "Safe, private setting (not a broom cupboard or somewhere other children can see)" (EP3)
>
> "Making sure that they are not missing out on their favourite lesson/break times" (EP4)

Four *restricting* factors were identified: Figure 8



Time and process: EPs perceived that SA work is time pressured, often with insufficient time for each CYP. The SA process is perceived as cumbersome, with CYP not typically involved with decision making and planning around outcomes.

> "Lack of time" (EP4)
>
> "I have felt so time-pressured in the last few years" (EP6)
>
> "oh, if only there were more *time"* (EP6)
>
> "CYP are often not involved in the planning/feedback meetings" (EP2)

"The 'mechanical' nature of the statutory process." (EP1)

CYP preparedness: EPs perceived CYP may not understand the SA process and are not adequately prepared to meet the EP, which might lead to lack of engagement. CYP may not express how they would like to be supported, nor be aware of the provision available to them.

"it could be that they just totally refused to engage, because they haven't been told; they haven't been informed." (EP4)

"it's really hard to ask children questions without prepping them first. I always think if someone asked me those questions I'd think of loads more things after I've been asked them than at the time" (EP5)

"I think most children have no idea what it's for, what it's being done for" (EP6)

"Just asking (CYP) questions." (EP2)

"Knowing what the provision is would help." (EP5)

Availability of information: There was an EP perception that both the quality/quantity of information available prior to meeting CYP can be lacking, affecting how the EP approaches involving CYP. EPs felt they lacked information on the school setting context and CYP's preferred methods of communication

"you're not sure of the protocols within that setting, the knowledge of the environment" (EP4)

"not being adequately informed about their needs, and then not perhaps having the most appropriate tools to gather their views" (EP5)

"we're going into schools that we know nothing about" (EP6)

Powerful non-CYP voices' influence: EPs perceived difficulties arising from when non-CYP 'voices' impinge on the SA process, which can interfere with fully involving

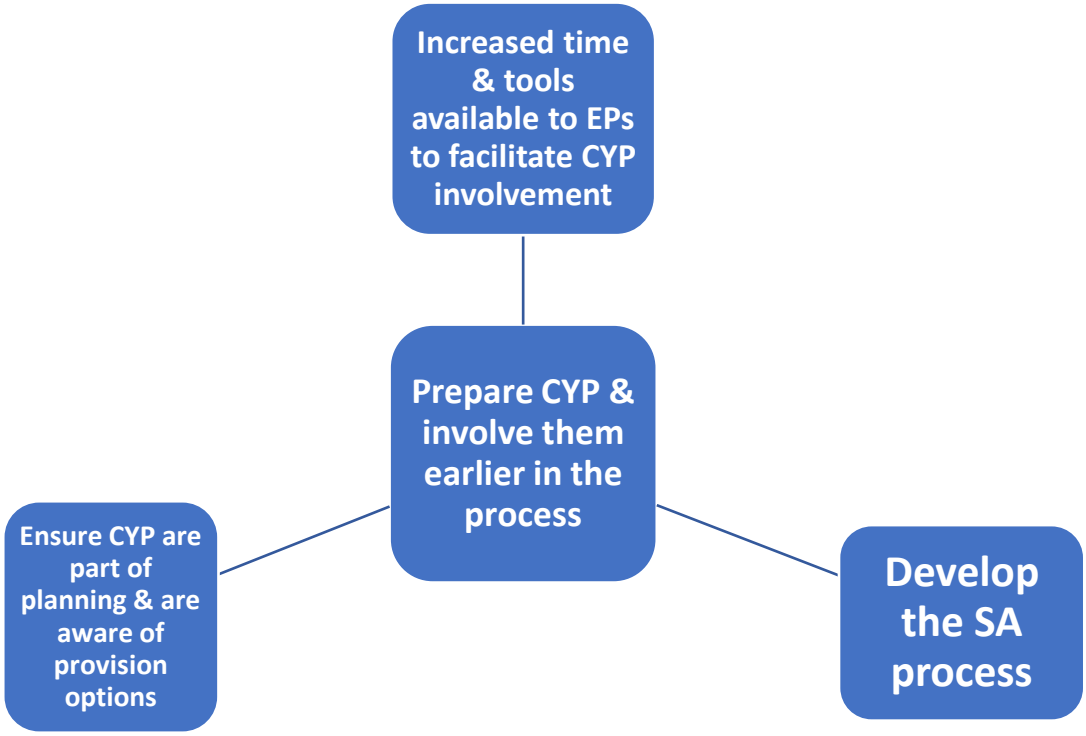
CYP. EPs perceived that adults sometimes maintain a 'we know best' attitude which can be disempowering for CYP and impacts on their self-advocacy.

> "sometimes, I think there's a danger that the grown-ups view or vision of what inclusion and empowerment is gets a little bit, you know, played out, rather than what's best for the CYP" (EP1)

> "there'll be some parents who will talk over or contradict their child" (EP4)

> "what you get bogged down in is vested interests… things the parents want that their children wouldn't necessarily agree with" (EP6)

RQ3 – How might the process be different in the future to promote fuller involvement of children? **4 themes were evident. Figure 9:**



Prepare CYP and involve them earlier in the process: EPs spoke of a desire to better prepare CYP, with letters, information sheets and videos, at an earlier stage. These measures were perceived as giving CYP time to think and process, and be more invested, leading to better outcomes.

> "send out a leaflet, I am an EP, and this is what I do, and this is why I'm coming to see you" (EP6)

> "(CYP views be) gathered over time in a range of ways" (EP1)
>
> "Pre-assessment gathering of information by the EP, including examples of success/where the child has experienced positive outcomes. Including out of school achievements, which are not always known by school." (EP2)
>
> "CYP should be prepped for the EP visit and have had a chance to think about what views they might like to share." (EP5)

Increased time and tools available to EPs: EPs perceived that more time, ideally two opportunities to meet with CYP, would facilitate their involvement, together with a range of differentiated CYP-friendly resources, comprising a 'PC toolbox'.

> "what we all need is a set of tools in a PC toolbox, and to apply professional judgement about what's needed" (EP6)
>
> "If there were more time, multiple visits." (EP1)
>
> "Child-friendly resources should be available and differentiated according to age, reading ability, developmental stage, etc." (EP5).

Ensure CYP are part of planning & are aware of provision options: There was an EP perception that planning should be collaborative, aided by space being made to 'hear' CYP 'voices', by use of Person-Centred meetings. This theme also relates to CYP being better informed on provision available.

> "Hold a person-centred meeting as a key part of the process, the records of which are the (Statutory) Advice" (EP3)
>
> "CYP could be involved in knowing this is what the provision is, this is what is expected to be in place to support you at school" (EP5)

Develop the SA process: EPs felt the process could be developed to include the use of photographic and video contributions from CYP, by making forms more CYP-friendly. Developing a procedure and record form for EPs to illustrate how they involved CYP, and auditing these, were suggested.

"But I know what's on the (referral) form and it's not that child friendly. We need to get away from those awful questions that go with the form filling exercises" (EP6)

"More use of video and photographic evidence" (EP6)

"a little box that says, 'I involved X by getting him to do an Ideal Self drawing, and telling me what they like to do" (EP1)

4.2 Discussion

EPs' methods and approaches used when involving CYP

Methods for involving CYP reported by participants are consistent with previous studies (Newton & Smillie, 2020, Harding & Atkinson, 2009, Norwich & Kelly, 2006): *all EPs* used verbal activities, indeed, these were the most common methods for involving CYP. However, responses suggest EPs vary in their use of such methods, and these were often *co-used* with other tools such as visuals, art or puppets. Moreover, EPs reported use of approaches that were *less reliant* on CYP both receiving and giving verbal responses, e.g. the use of visual and symbolic approaches, with use of concrete resources such as drawing, play, symbols, and pictures.

However, whilst verbal approaches were mentioned by all EP participants the range of non-verbal (e.g. visual) resources were mentioned by between one and three EP respondents. This might be interpreted as being indicative of individual professional practice preferences, a lack of accessibility of such tools or a lack of experience or confidence in using more recently available non-verbal tools and resources. The implications for practice may be suggestive that there exists a need from EPs in this LA to have access to and use of a range of visual / non-verbal tools.

It is interesting to note that no EP respondent mentioned use of technology to involve CYP. It is currently unclear if this reflects EP practice prior to Covid 19, because the survey specifically asked respondents to report on their practice before the pandemic impacted. Equally, it may suggest that this is an area that requires development, especially when considering how EPs may be increasingly likely to work in a 'remote'

manner. The Bridging and Reflective chapter will discuss the impact of the pandemic on ways of ensuring CYP involvement in SA processes.

In line with Fox (2017), EPs often use surface (observation), solution-focused techniques and PCP methods, either verbally or visually, with CYP.

EPs described 30 different tools to involve CYP, a diversity reflective of previous research (e.g. Wicks, 2013). Comparing the tools in the current study with those listed by Jarrett & N'jie (2019), EPs reported using six of the same resources, including non-verbal and visual tools. Results indicate that, consistent with the COP (2014), EPs' focus on CYP as individuals, and, by tailoring their approaches, enable CYP to express their views. It appears that an EP's choice of tool was dependent on the age and needs of each individual CYP, congruent with findings by Harding and Atkinson (2009).

4.3 Factors EPs identify as enabling CYP involvement

The subtheme of *openness* appears to tie in with Jarrett & N'jie's (2019) and Howarth's (2016) recommendation for EPs to explain their purpose to CYP. Openness seems to relate to Maslow's (1970a, 1970b) cognitive needs relating to EPs supporting CYP's understanding and knowledge by sending information sheets and providing clarity on the SA process.

The subtheme of *practicalities* reflects participants' expressed views that careful timing of meetings with CYP, with sufficient time to build rapport and a relationship, in a safe environment, all positively contribute to working in a person-centred manner and involving CYP. Maslow's (1970 a, 1970 b) hierarchy of needs, specifically CYP's need for safety, appears highly relevant to this theme.

The subtheme of an *EP's professional skills* relates to Roller's (1998) suggestion of developing an understanding of the constructs CYP hold. This theme ties in with the writings of Fontana and Fernandes (1994). CYP's self-determination may be promoted when EPs demonstrate curiosity and attunement, based on an understanding of the constructs CYP may hold. When an EP expresses agreement with CYP's expressed preferences and suggestions for their future SEN support, this may add to their experience of being heard and positively understood, contributing to self-determination.

This subtheme also taps into Norwich & Kelly's (2006) paper, whereby EPs report using a combination of informal and formal processes to involve CYP, starting by building trusting relationships. EPs use various psychological techniques to demonstrate respect, empathy and authenticity, as advocated by Fox (2016). Cohen *et al*. (2000) also emphasise the importance of establishing trust, to discover ways to go beyond eliciting the responses CYP *think* the EP wants to hear. This subtheme links to the ethical and philosophical writings of Kay (2019) and Sewell (2016). EP participants report using pre-reflection to consider their approaches. This could be seen as them mooring themselves in ethical principles, and adhering to professional guidelines, especially that of respect (BPS, 2018). Kay argues these are key in equalising power and in achieving anti-oppressive practice. Likewise, Sewell (2016) suggests EPs ensure CYP involvement is generated in an authentic manner.

The subtheme *facilitating communication* could be understood as demonstrating how EP participants aim to practice congruently with UNCRC articles 13 and 17: establishing and using CYP's preferred communication methods where possible. Moreover, by selecting appropriate tools to facilitate CYP communication, EPs may be supporting CYP in developing self-advocacy (Kay, 2019). There are further links to the COP, with EPs' use of communication tools enabling CYP to express views and by providing them with accessible information. This theme taps into the principles of self-determination theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 2000), where EPs attempt to determine the most appropriate methods for communicating with CYP. Moreover, CYP's self-determination may be enhanced by them receiving appropriate information before, during and after an EP visit.

Overall, the above subtheme analysis concurs with Norwich & Kelly's (2009) study, that EPs use a diverse range of activities and resources. It is interesting to note that some themes related to *enabling* appear to be at the opposite end of continuums with themes identified as *restricting*. For example, the *enabling* subtheme *facilitating communication* appears to oppose the *restricting* subtheme of *CYP preparedness*. The extent to which EPs feel the SA process can be *concurrently both* enabling and restricting could be usefully explored further in future research.

4.4 Factors EPs identify as restricting CYP involvement

In subtheme one, *time and process*, participants' perceptions appear to mirror those of EPs in Harding & Atkinson's (2009) study. They reported being aware that EP involvement with CYP was brief. EP6's exclamation of "oh, if only there were more *time*!" summarises what some EPs expressed in the interviews. Moreover, EPs similarly perceived that their choice of tool or approach is dependent on the time available to them for direct work with CYP. Other research bears this out, e.g. Bloom *et al*. (2020b) identified there was a lack of EP time to promote CYP involvement. It seems that time pressure can inhibit EPs' practice in completing activities to build trust and rapport which research shows (e.g. Cohen *et al*., 2000) are so crucial in supporting CYP to feel comfortable and confident to communicate their views. The extent to which these impact on an EP's ability to generate CYP involvement in an authentic manner (Sewell, 2016) would be interesting to explore.

Indeed, Norwich & Kelly (2006) emphasise the importance of building open and trusting relationships with CYP, which arguably can be difficult to achieve in a short, one-off meeting. It seems therefore that a lack of time, driven by the EHC process of seeking to capture the information that the process requires but which may not necessarily incorporate what is important from CYP's perspective, may result in tokenistic involvement (Stewart, 1995).

The second subtheme, *CYP preparedness*, has been debated by other researchers, e.g. Lubel & Graves (2010), mentioned above. It would seem that in this LA, CYP may be lacking an understanding, prior to the EP visit, of the purpose of their interactions in the 'assessment': how, when and why they are giving their views. CYP themselves have been reported to want to be more fully informed in advance of meeting EPs (Woolfson *et al*., 2008), yet currently, this LA does not send out CYP-specific information. It would be useful to determine how many educational psychology services currently send CYP's letters to explain the EP visit and role.

The subtheme *powerful non-CYP voices* reflects participant's perceptions of how various adults who know CYP, including teachers and parents, may influence the process of CYP involvement. It is suggested that this theme appears to be detrimental to CYP achieving self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Research indicates that professionals in education sometimes restrict independence in choice-making for CYP

with SEN, making decisions *for them* as part of an atmosphere of 'knowing best' (e.g. Morgan *et al.,* 2002). Howarth (2016) narrates how CYP can be habituated to having adults speak on their behalf.

The way in which others explain the essay process to CYP will contribute to CYP's understanding of expected responses and the extent to which they may engage with the process (Clark and Williams, 2008). This finding appears to link to the theme *CYP preparedness.*

Participants' perceptions suggest that Armstrong's (2007) findings on second-hand views of parents or other professionals are still relevant. EPs explained that when a CYP chose not to engage with them, they were reliant upon other adults obtaining and reporting the CYP's views. This can lead to the EP experiencing an ethical dilemma, especially as there is evidence to suggest (e.g. Lundy, 2007) that adults sometimes place less value on gathering CYP views. Indeed, when working with CYP to gather views, the process can be warped by them doing so to increase their own feelings of control (Whitty & Wisby, 2007). Lubel and Graves (2000) assert that power differentials are apparent in SA processes and systems. There is agreement in the literature with this view whereby systems around CYP, and power dynamics when adults attempt to elicit CYP's views in educational contexts are reported as restrictive factors (Jelly et al. 2000; Lewis, 2002).

The final subtheme, *availability of information*, pertains to EP perceptions on a paucity of information, often in the referral. Incomplete information was said to affect EPs in establishing CYP's preferred mode of communication and in preparing suitable approaches or tools.

4.5 EP perceptions of what might be different to promote fuller CYP engagement – implications for practice

Evidence from surveys and interviews suggests that EPs feel CYP should be provided with information on the SA process, EP role and what to expect when meeting the EP (subtheme one; *prepare CYP and involve them earlier*). Additionally, EPs expressed the desire for CYP to receive tailored and differentiated letters from the EP by way of an introduction. EPs felt both should include photographs, language and illustrations

appropriate to the CYP's age, SEN needs and developmental stage. It was perceived that these would ensure CYP were not only prepared to meet the EP, but would have had sufficient time to process and think about what they would like to contribute.

EP perceptions around subtheme 2, *increased time and tools available*, centred on preferences to meet CYP twice or more, with opportunities to gather information from them prior to meeting. It was felt that the use of a positive psychology framework (e.g. Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) may usefully support the elicitation of examples of CYP successes and achievements from outside school. These factors were felt to be facilitative of building rapport and relationships with CYP. The development of a consistent range of differentiated, CYP friendly tools and resources, in a PC toolbox, was felt to be a useful area to support EPs' practice.

Three EPs spoke of using person centred meeting formats as ideally suited in achieving subtheme 3, *ensure CYP are part of planning & are aware of provision options*. These are viewed by EPs as being collaborative and CYP-friendly; use of accessible language and the visual approach. Examples might be Making Action Plans (MAPS) or Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) (Forest, Pearpoint, & O'Brien, 1996).

Finally, in *developing the SA process* (subtheme four), there was a consistent preference, across all EPs, for this to include photographs and videos, subject to GDPR compliance. EPs also explained that the referral form requires improvements, to make it more child friendly. The SA process might also be developed by EPs in the LA agreeing a process and a form for EPs to document how they involved each CYP. It was suggested that this could be audited to inform further improvements over time.

Evidence in this study is consistent with previous studies (e.g. Day, 2010; Hayes, 2004; Lewis *et al*., 2008; Howarth, 2016) that there should be increased use of visual, photographic and video supports, available to CYP, both to express their views and to support their understanding. The results also concur with suggestions by Bloom *et al.* (2020b) regarding increased time and tools available for EPs and on preparing CYP (Howarth, 2016). The current study provides some support for the conclusions drawn by Aston & Lambert (2010) in that there was an EP expressed desire to develop more CYP supportive systems to involve CYP.

4.6 Conclusions

In summary, this small-scale study has begun to generate understanding regarding how EPs in one LA involve CYP in their SA practice. It provides data to EPs in the service pertaining to EP's reported use of a diverse range of approaches and tools when involving CYP in the SA process, which they tailor to each CYP.

EP participant perceptions indicate that when CYP are prepared, understand the EP role and SA process and use their preferred method of communication in a safe environment, with sufficient time for a trusting relationship to exist, that involvement is maximised. In contrast, when there is insufficient time, a lack of information and poor CYP understanding of the EP and the SA process, coupled with inappropriate communication methods, involvement and person-centred working is impeded. Powerful non-CYP voices and environmental factors also negatively impact on CYP involvement.

In addressing these issues, EPs clearly voiced preference for the development of new systems, procedures and tools which would promote greater CYP involvement, not just in SA assessments, but also in agreeing outcomes and in decision making. There was broad support for developing and using a range of non-verbal, visual supports to facilitate CYP in participating, in agreement with the literature (Day, 2010, Lewis et al., 2008, Bloom et al., 2020b). The PC meeting format was one such method that EPs were keen to develop. EPs in this LA are also keen to embrace the use of technology as a vehicle for CYP to develop their understanding of the SA process and to be more fully involved in it.

This study has contributed to the developing literature regarding how EPs record CYP views, the resources and strategies they use in doing so and their perceptions of enabling and restricting factors on involving CYP. The results suggest there is a requirement to provide CYP friendly information about the EP role and the SA process. EPs are keen to embrace technology as a means for communicating with CYP, including photos and videos, and to explain their role to CYP in advance. There was also a clear desire to move beyond a 'one off' meeting with CYP.

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Reflective and bridging chapter

4.8 Introduction and overview

This reflective and bridging chapter draws heavily on my reflective research diary. The chapter begins with the story of how I came to complete this study, followed by an anecdotal and personal historical view, from a retired Principal EP, which is linked to the legislative context, from the 1960s to the 1990s. For transparency, here I include a reflexive position statement. There follows an examination of my methodology, the process of my research, what I did and why, and an outline of its strengths. In turn, I explain what I did *not* do, why, and evaluate the weaknesses of the study alongside the limitations of this line of enquiry. Next, I give an account of my learning journey. Finally, I explore implications for EP practice and service delivery, describe the proposed dissemination of the research and offer tentative suggestions for future study.

4.9 Background story of the evolution of this study

I shall begin with a bold, but entirely truthful statement: this study was *not* what I had set my heart on completing. During most of the first and second year of my Doctoral training (September 2018-April 2020), I developed my *original* research proposal. The title of my study was “A.R.R.O.W. - does it hit its target? Evaluating the A.R.R.O.W. intervention for word reading, spelling and working memory in children with diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and pupils’ perceptions”. (The acronym A.R.R.O.W. stands for Aural – Read – Respond – Oral – Write). A.R.R.O.W. is an evidence-based multi-sensory intervention developed by Colin Lane, and uses the child’s own voice (self-voice) to develop deep neurological processing of sounds (Lane 2010; Brooks 2007, 2012, 2016). It has been shown to produce significant gains in word reading and spelling skills.

The research proposal was approved. I successfully completed two ethics applications and a 5000-word literature review. By this time, I was, as you may imagine, heavily invested in my study. A local specialist setting for pupils with diagnoses of ASC had agreed to the research being conducted on their site and a risk assessment had been undertaken. Participant information sheets and informed

consent forms had been painstakingly created and then sent to 4 potential participants, with one participant already signed up by April 2020.

The study was a mixed method design, answering 3 research questions; how effective is A.R.R.O.W. in improving reading/spelling standard scores, what are pupil's perceptions of A.R.R.O.W. and are perceptions related to effectiveness, and how does A.R.R.O.W. impact on pupils' digit span? Pre-and post- standardised scores of pupils' word reading, spelling and digit span (WIAT-III and WISC-V) would have been analysed statistically, to determine effect sizes (Greig, Taylor and MacKay, 2007). Following successful completion of the A.R.R.O.W. intervention, pupils would have met with me for an informal interview, which would have been recorded, then transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interview questions and visual supports had already been prepared.

5.0 A global pandemic strikes…starting over

Yet, in April 2020, it became clear that completing this research was impossible. Not only were Doctoral students forbidden to complete face-to-face research, but many schools were closed. Moreover, both my University and the Health Care Professions Council issued guidance to students advising against face-to-face interactions. Thus, in May 2020, I was put in the position of needing to restart my thesis, entirely from scratch. It was a daunting task. Moreover, there was significantly limited time for me to do so. In discussion with my co-course directors, it was emphasised that my new study needed to be realistic, achievable and pragmatic, given the constraints of the context and time available.

A key part of discussions therefore involved planning around ensuring I had sufficient time for each stage of the research. In conjunction with the course directors, I set myself date plans / deadlines for:

- agreeing a focus area for my study;
- completing an initial literature review to inform my 2nd research proposal;
- formulating research questions, methodology, developing participant information sheet, informed consent and survey questionnaire;
- dates for my 2nd research proposal, 2nd (two) ethics applications and my 2nd literature review;

- dates by which email invitations to potential participants would be sent, the final participant sample be decided, surveys received from participants and interviews be completed;
- a date by which all data analyses would be complete;
- dates for submission of thesis chapters.

I entertained completing a more in-depth study related to the small-scale research project I had completed in my first year of Doctoral training, which examined EPs' perceptions of quality assurance processes in the service. However, I discounted this because there was very limited literature to review. I held virtual meetings with the course directors, a senior EP and the principal EP in my service, receiving advice on areas of research that were both pragmatic but also met the local authorities' (LAs') requirement of relevance. For the latter, the research needed to link to the LA's strategic plan ('plan on a page').

From a shortlist of four research options that I had developed, *one* seemed to resonate with me most clearly, and this was reflected by the views of both the Principal EP and a Senior EP. At the time, this was worded as follows: 'How do EPs work to take account of children and young people's (CYP's) views in statutory assessments – to what extent are they able to take a person-centred approach?' As I sought to identify literature and read widely, I was able to refine and hone this to result in the final 3 research questions.

Having decided *what* I was going to study, I set about writing a new research proposal and completed two completely new ethics applications: one for my university and one for my LA. Concurrently, I took some time to process the feelings that I experienced due to having to abandon my initial research, after having invested so much time and effort into it. In a way, this felt like a bereavement and I sought ongoing support from my university mentor to process the emotions I was experiencing. With reflection and hindsight, I can see how important it was that I had support to overcome the loss I experienced. As I progressed into the process of immersing myself within a new literature review, I then found myself in the right mental state to experience the start of a sense of excitement and increasing passion towards my new area of study, which served to spur me on. Over the summer of 2020, having received ethical approval, my research went ahead.

The critical importance of reflection in EP practice is well documented. Indeed, there is an obligatory requirement (Health Care professions Council, 2015) that practitioners 'be able to reflect and review practice' (HCPC, Standards of Proficiency, 11.1 p 12).

5.1 My personal historical view of the legislative context

My mother, whose pseudo-name is Beatrice, was an EP from 1966, becoming a Principal EP in the 1980s, until 2014 when she retired. In various conversations over recent years, her accounts of how EPs worked prior to the 1981 Education Act had an important bearing on my choice of this area of study. I felt it pertinent to include this in my reflections, because, in some ways, I believe EPs are *still fighting* to advocate for children's meaningful involvement in statutory assessments (SA), as some of the subthemes apparent in my data revealed (e.g*., develop SA processes* and *better prepare CYP and involve them earlier in the process*).

5.2 Reflexivity

The above paragraph demonstrates why reflexivity is so important in qualitative research (Palaganas *et al.,* 2017). To what extent might my beliefs on restricting and enabling factors have influenced aspects of my research, e.g., the design of the survey, focus of the interviews, how I approached coding, identifying patterns, etc, in Thematic Analysis? Reflexivity, for me, pertained to understanding the influence of myself, as researcher, as well as my relationships with participants and how to make these explicit (Jootun *et al.,* 2009), which will be explored below. I also wanted to acknowledge the filters through which my research was conducted i.e. how my agenda *led* my research process (Hesse-Biber, 2007). I felt driven to complete the study for a number of different reasons. These included, in no particular order:

- satisfying University course requirements,
- demonstrating professional competencies,
- pursuing research that my service and LA would find useful and which might influence EP practice,
- adding to the developing literature,
- to help me develop my own range of tools, strategies, resources,

- establishing my own habits for consistently and routinely involving children in statutory assessments,
- a genuine desire in myself to explore how EPs are currently working and to reflect on this.

Reflection has also been crucial to me. This included an acknowledgement of the doubts that I experienced. These included: would I be able to frame research questions to result in the discovery of new information, would I be able to design a study to provide convincing data, anticipate difficulties and negotiate ways around these? I gradually realised that no one knew the 'answers', that this research was mine and so it was down to me to find the ways to solve particular problems I encountered. Reflection helped me to see and acknowledge that there were, and still are, a vast array of things I don't know.

Schon (1983, 1987) explains reflective practice as involving a practitioner thoughtfully considering their experiences to develop connections betwixt their practice and knowledge. Moon (1999) recommends that practitioners should evaluate and review their practice to promote learning, and therefore views reflective practice as a problem solving and creative activity. Various frameworks exist, which I have explored, e.g. Dewey's (1933) 5 stage framework.

I have found Gibb's (1988) reflective cycle most useful throughout my journey completing this research. In particular, exploring my feelings and analysing how I had made sense of research experiences were especially helpful in writing my reflective diary.

I found this research felt akin to being immersed in the unknown (Schwartz, 2008). Until I analysed the data, I would not know if I had asked the right questions or used the most appropriate analysis method. I felt agreement with Schwartz, 2008, who argues the importance of stupidity in scientific research. Although not completing traditional empirical research, I still felt that I needed to confront my 'absolute stupidity'. Schwartz describes this as "an existential fact inherent in our efforts to push our way into the unknown" (p 1771). At the same time, completing this research felt cathartic for me.

The British Psychological Society (2014) Code of Human Research Ethics was useful to me in considering respect for the dignity and autonomy of the EP participants, alongside social responsibility and scientific value. Moreover, reflecting on these principles facilitated me in maximising benefit and minimising harm to participants. I hope that securing informed consent and reminding them verbally and in writing of their right to withdraw enabled me to demonstrate 'Respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons'. Assurances of anonymity and the removal of identifying information further supported this principal. For me, clear and effective communication in the participant information sheets facilitated the promotion of participant's interests (Health Care Professions Council 2018 *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics).*

Debriefing is planned for the autumn of 2021 and will be offered to each participant on an individual basis, in addition to each participant receiving a copy of a summary of the research findings.

In terms of social responsibility, self-reflection was critical to understanding how effectively I had worked with my professional colleagues during the course of the research. Pre-reflection and regular reflective diary entries helped me to anticipate and think through possible unexpected outcomes. For example, what would I do if a participant became upset during an interview? How would I respond if a participant disclosed certain types of information in a survey? How might participants receive the particular interpretations of the data when presented with the findings; how would I respond to challenges to my interpretations? Finally, to remain within the limits of my professional competence, I decided to utilise research design and methodology that I fully understood and had experience with.

5.3 My positionality

Here, it seems befitting for me to open myself up to the reader and lay out my social position. Indeed, Fine (1994) asserts that researchers need to engage in a 'I – thou' relationship, pertaining to the work they are undertaking.

I am in my late 40s, female, white British, and identify as middle-class. I am classed as having ‘disabilities’ by my university and by legislation (Equality Act, 2010) and use a range of ‘reasonable adjustments’ in work and study contexts. I ruminated on how my own experiences pertaining to my disabilities may have subconsciously influenced this study. Did it make me more attuned to EPs speaking about the need for using visual supports with children? Might my experiences have made me more likely to identify patterns and sub themes relating to EPs’ use of tools to facilitate communication with children?

Yet, my positionality is not static, but comprises a process (Deutsch 1981) which is explored below regarding my position as an ‘insider’ with the participants in the interviews. Herod’s (1999) writings on the researcher positionality of ‘other’ seems relevant to me, as in my case, I felt I could empathise with my EP participants. Concurrently, I did not have the same experiential knowledge as they did. Consequently, I perceived myself to be moving between different positions, as researcher, junior colleague and as an equal with EP participants.

5.4 Methodology: The research process (what was done and why): strengths of the study

5.4.1 Data collection tools

I chose to use survey questionnaires as a primary method of data collection because I wanted a tool that would enable me to ask participants both open and closed questions (Fish, 2006). Moreover, there were pragmatic considerations: surveys are quick, easy, inexpensive and can be focused on a topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I also felt that through use of this methodology, EP’s responses would be more standardised and hence be more useful for analysis based on patterns.

My overarching rationale for asking EP participants to complete the survey prior to their interview was based on pragmatic considerations. I anticipated that some participants may be short of time to complete the survey, moreover, the activity of typing could inhibit a deeper and more rich description of their perceptions and views. I therefore asked for surveys to be returned prior to agreeing a date and time for the interview, to enable me to develop probing questions based on responses to the survey, again, to elicit a richer and detailed dataset. The interview purpose was

primarily to delve more deeply into EPs' written responses to the survey and to build understanding of EP's perceptions and views.

5.5 Preparation and planning

Re-reading my reflective research diary, I can see that due to time pressure, I felt a strong urge to 'get on' and finalise survey and interview questions so that I could begin data collection. Nevertheless, it is clear that regular reflection encouraged me to slow down and spend time preparing both the survey and loosely semi-structured interview questions and prompts. In doing so, I had opportunity to explicitly think about what I hoped the surveys and interviews would cover, anticipate some issues and consider how I might handle these. My diary also suggests that preparing helped me to focus more fully on what interviewees were saying (Smith, 1995).

In writing the survey questions, I carefully considered the language and wording, to ensure these were unambiguous and clear. It was also important to offer participants a definition of 'person centred' work with CYP. I hoped that this ensured their responses pertained to a broadly equivalent understanding of person-centred as opposed to varying conceptualisations. I decided, for consistency, to include the same definition that I used in my literature review and empirical paper. I followed advice (e.g. Braun & Clarke, 2013) on determining the most user-friendly order of questions, from general to specific, and their layout. To promote readability, I used a large font. The instructions were for the survey were short and designed to be easy to understand.

5.6 Interviews

Using semi-structured interviews, as an opt in, appealed to me greatly. Partly, I felt the use of interviews would help me to overcome problems with depersonalisation, common to some data collection methods such as multiple-choice questions (Oakley, 1981). Yet again, what I *wanted* to do and what I *ended up* doing was compromised by measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission, resulting in EP interviews being completed by phone, not face-to-face.

My interview style has developed over many years of work with young adults, prior to my Doctoral training, and is therefore my own style (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). My style

is based on active listening, which comprises summarising, paraphrasing and gentle probing. After each interview, I reflected on the ways in which my style, interview practices and values might have influenced the data produced. For example, EP6 spoke a lot about lack of time, which I empathised with to demonstrate my understanding. I wondered the extent to which this influenced EP6 to speak *more* about this than if I had been neutral.

For me, the importance of developing rapport and trust with participants was key (Reinhartz, 1993). Thus, I started each conversation in a very informal manner, asking general questions and gradually building up to asking the participant if they were ready to begin the interview and for me to begin the recording. This served the purpose of reminding them of the aim of the interview and demonstrated my respect for them.

All four interviewees were known to me, hence they could be seen as 'acquaintance interviews' (Garton & Copland, 2010) which placed me in a dual relationship with participants. These factors bring their own unique set of advantages and disadvantages, with the disadvantages being discussed in the later section. I feel the advantages were that the participants all appeared comfortable with me, were familiar with how I communicated, and consequently felt free to speak at length on their experiences, views and perceptions.

In the interviews, I used a variety of descriptive, structural, contrast and evaluative questions (Spradley, 1979). Open questions used at the start included 'how did you find the survey?' Closed questions were typically 'is there anything else you would like to tell me that I haven't asked you?', and also served as 'clean-up' questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

I found the interviews very fluid; often participants would shift to speak about issues related to different questions to the one I had asked, so I found it useful to structure questions (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009) to signify a move to a different area. Reflecting on the interviews, and when reviewing the transcripts, I noticed that I used a lot of prompts and probes, comprising my natural tendency to use noises such as "uh huh, mmm" alongside verbal questions such as "could you tell me more about…". My reflective diary also enabled me to see the extent to which I had, via my questions and comments, steered interviews to attempt to gain data to address

my research questions. Willig (2009) quite rightly points out that there is a balance required here, on the one hand of keeping control of an interview and on the other, of giving participants space to describe the topic from their perspective, yielding unique insights for me as a researcher.

5.7 Immersing myself in the data

I feel that transcribing the interviews verbatim, retaining their para-linguistic features, was an important and successful part of the process. This aided me with understanding participants' linguistic variability (Willig 2009), in effect, assisting me with understanding what the participant *meant* by what they said. Therefore, when a participant emphasised a word, phrase or sound, in transcription this emphasis was retained. It was, I found, extremely useful to have this when it came to selecting data extracts to use illustratively in my empirical paper. For example, EP6's utterance of "oh, if only there were more *time*" would have seemed less relevant without the italic emphasis on the word 'time'.

The transcription process, for me, formed a vital part of my immersion in and familiarisation with the qualitative data. This translates directly to Lincoln & Guba's (1985) criteria of trustworthiness (credibility), as explained by Nowell *et al.,* (2017), which will be returned to later. I feel it was an essential part of my analysis of the data, despite the very time-consuming nature of this undertaking. I aimed to be as accurate as possible in transcribing the interviews. Yet as qualitative researchers and authors Braun & Clarke (2013) caution, the best any researcher can hope to achieve in transcription is a 'representation', i.e., it is not raw data but is, as Sandelowski, (1994a) so eloquently puts it, "partially cooked" (p.312).

5.8 Thematic analysis

I chose to use thematic analysis (TA, Braun and Clark, 2006) due to its flexibility and my familiarity with it. I did consider using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) but discounted it due to its focus on exploring participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attach to these, which were not the focus of my study. Furthermore, Larkin *et al*. (2006) and Braun & Clarke (2013) criticise it as a method

that is merely descriptive and lacking in the richness and depth of narrative inherent in TA.

I decided against *selective* coding, instead opting for *complete* coding to enable me to identify *anything* that was relevant to my research questions, using researcher-derived codes. The advantage of using researcher derived codes were that they helped me to uncover implicit meanings contained in the data, i.e. participants' assumptions underpinning what they said. Complete coding inevitably resulted in some overlap. However, this was useful because it aided me in the formation of patterns and ensured I was inclusive (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

I found the identification of patterns across the data a very lengthy process, necessitating me returning over and over to the data, in what felt like a very active manner, yielding a plethora of notes, sticky-notes, colour-coded ideas for subthemes and the like, which took over an entire room. This process naturally led on to me identifying sub themes and central organising concepts. In keeping with Charmaz (2006), some codes appeared complex, rich and large enough and thus were 'promoted' to a subtheme. Transcribing the interviews, immersing myself in the data, coding and searching for patterns took me three weeks to complete. I feel that taking my time during this process is a strength of my approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I feel that by allowing myself this time, I was able to have increased opportunities for a greater depth of analysis.

The identification of patterns across the survey data I felt was rather trickier to negotiate than the transcripts, something which is acknowledged as a common challenge for researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I was aided by maintaining data by participant as opposed to by question asked, which enabled me to pick up patterns from across surveys rather than just around questions. Another factor that facilitated my perception of success with my TA was my experience of doing this previously, and knowing that my task was to be selective, in effect, aiming to retain confidence in the telling of *my* story about the obtained data to answer my research questions, as opposed to including *all* of the data. (Braun & Clarke, 2013). When revising and returning, in a cyclical manner, to my coded and collated data, I was helped by accepting the need to let go, and even at this stage, it helped me to

remember that the analysis does not fit in with a linear process but goes backwards and forwards.

I opted to treat my data illustratively rather than analytically. I did this in order to create detailed and rich descriptions and interpretations of sub themes, with quotations from participants providing examples of my analytic points. Braun & Clarke (2013) label this an essentialist analysis, whereby my aim is to narrate the story of the data.

There are ongoing discussions on requirements for sample sizes for TA. Fugard & Potts (2015) argued that guides (2 – 400+) lack detail on how researchers should choose a value. Braun & Clarke (2016) responded by contending that researchers can take a flexible approach, and that larger sample sizes do not necessarily translate to improved results. Indeed, they describe how larger samples may lead to difficulties in capturing the nuances within data. Braun & Clarke (2016) conclude that it is more important to develop a clear conceptualisation of what themes represent, i.e., why and how they are treated as significant, over and above considering sample size.

‘Saturation’

Sandelowski (1995) recommends samples be of sufficient size to promote a rich, textured understanding. Likewise, Morse (2000) suggests that if participants are providing large amounts of meaningful data, then fewer participants are required. Thus I arrived at a minimum sample size of 6, which was felt to be an important pragmatic consideration. I felt that I reached saturation when I could no longer generate new codes from my dataset.

Yet, recently, Braun and Clarke (2021) argued that concepts of data saturation/information redundancy evoke discovery-oriented, neo-positivist TA methods that are inconsistent with the assumptions and values of reflexive TA. They conclude that meaning will be generated by the interpretation of data, thus issues pertaining to how many to include in a sample are by definition subjective, and impossible to fully determine prior to the analysis.

I reached the themes reported in the empirical paper by initially immersing myself in all sources of data to increase my familiarity with it, highlighting aspects relevant to research questions, which included initial codes and conceptual ideas and issues. I

also found it useful to ask myself questions, such as ‘how is the EP making sense of these experiences?’ Complete coding then helped me to identify anything of relevance to the research questions.

The distinctiveness of themes was decided by determining levels of similarity in codes, and judging the importance of the subtle distinctions when answering research questions. Relatedly, pattern identification from the data focused on various elements of it appeared most meaningful when answering the research questions. Furthermore, theme distinctiveness was aided by writing theme definitions.

5.9 Trustworthiness

I feel that, to some extent, my study met Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) evaluative criteria of credibility, transferability and confirmability. Credibility will have been achieved if readers of my study recognise the experiences of participants, their perceptions and views, as represented by me (Tobin & Beglay, 2004). As detailed above, I feel persistent observation and my lengthy engagement with data aided this. For transferability, I hope that by describing data in a ‘thick’ manner, so that readers can judge if findings ‘fit’ their location, I will have achieved this criterion. Regarding dependability, by very closely following Braun & Clarke’s (2006) logical TA process, retaining all documents securely, and including an appropriate level of detail in my empirical paper, I hope to have achieved this criterion. In terms of confirmability, my findings and interpretations come from the data. Koch (1994) suggests I include the reasons for my methodology, theoretical and analytic decisions for the whole study, which I hope I have satisfied in this chapter, to aid others in their understanding of how I made choices (Nowell et al., 2017).

Overall, I feel that the approach taken yielded a useful range of quantitative and qualitative data, with the TA of the latter revealing clear themes on enabling and restricting factors alongside a range of useful suggestions for how the process might be improved.

Overcoming limitations

Whilst acknowledging that my sample size was small, having spent time reflecting on my research, it is apparent to me that EP respondents in both the survey and the interviews provided 'enough' data to enable me to undertake reflexive TA on the dataset. Having been through this very lengthy and detailed process, I feel that had I obtained a larger sample size, the work involved would have been at risk of overwhelming me, which may have led to me failing to pick up on nuances within EPs' accounts.

My study has contributed unique insights to an emerging area of the literature, which I hope will be built upon over time.

Participation – involvement?

In hindsight, I can see that my desire to 'get on' with my study in the very short amount of time available to me contributed to a dilemma: should I use the term 'participation' or 'involvement' ? When writing the literature review, I had settled upon using participation, however when I wrote my research ethics application and research questions, I substituted participation with involvement. This is an oversight and something that I have learned from.

In online dictionaries that I checked, the noun *involvement* is defined as "the act of taking part in an activity, event, or situation" and the noun *participation* is defined as "the process of taking part in something". The most common synonym for involvement is participation and the most common synonym for participation is involvement. Although one could argue there are subtle differences between involvement and participation, the words share agreed upon common meanings.

6.0 What was not done and why, weaknesses of the study and limitations of the line of enquiry

6.0.1 Use of surveys

A disadvantage of the study is the lack of flexibility offered to participants by using surveys. EPs' responses are arguably constrained. For the two participants who decided not to opt in to the interviews, there was no opportunity to extend and probe (Frith & Gleeson, 2008) their written responses. Braun & Clarke (2013) state that data from surveys can be thinner than data from focus groups and interviews, and suggest researchers compensate by using a larger sample. I did not do this because of time pressure but hoped to compensate, to some extent, by the use of opt in interviews. Having conducted a focus group with EPs earlier in my Doctoral study, I knew that this was a data collection method that yielded rich, detailed accounts. It would have been very interesting to facilitate a focus group, to determine what 'naturalistic' accounts may have been generated (Wellings et al. 2000), how EPs made collective sense (Frith, 2000), agreed or disputed the various facets related to children's involvement in SA.

Several factors conspired to make use of focus groups impractical to me (very poor Internet speed preventing use of video/multiple member calls, anticipated difficulty of finding a date and time which was suitable for all participants, my apprehension around the unknown element of completing a focus group in a remote manner as opposed to face-to-face).

6.0.2 Small sample size

A disadvantage of my study is the small number of participants and a response rate of only 40%, which I feel could be improved upon. I did encounter some difficulties in recruiting participants. I sent out two email invitations to the whole EP team in my service. The first email only yielded two participants, the second yielded four more. The response rate of six from a total EP pool of 15 is not ideal. One participant (the seventh) agreed to both survey and interview but did not return their survey. I felt torn between sending a third invitation email, asking again for participants, and the need to not repeatedly 'hound' EP colleagues with such emails. In the end, I decided against asking for any more participants.

Reflecting has helped me to understand that my inclusion/exclusion criteria may have been restrictive, constituting a weakness to my study. My decision to exclude trainee EPs (TEPs) was, I feel, erroneous. Indeed, some TEPs quickly and enthusiastically replied to my invitation emails, eager to participate. Likewise, to increase my sample further, it might have been helpful to include the invitation email to locum EPs who complete SA work for the service.

Another possible weakness factor is the tension I experienced between wishing to protect participants' identifying information (preserving their anonymity) versus asking certain questions in the survey. I would like to have included a question in the survey which asked participants when they qualified as an EP. This would have enabled me to explore any relationship between length of experience as an EP and practice in involving children as well as perceptions of enabling and restricting factors, etc. Had I included TEPs, it might have been useful to compare their responses with those of EPs who have been practising for a longer time period.

I considered extending the potential pool of participants to the whole of the UK. I could have used 'EPNET' to reach out to EPs, inviting them to participate in the survey and interviews. I chose not to do this because I wanted my study to be relevant to my service and LA, i.e., specific to this context of service delivery.

6.1 Credibility

Returning to Lincoln & Guba's (1985) criteria of trustworthiness, specifically credibility, I did not use peer debriefing as a check, nor did I employ member checking. For the latter, by the time I had written my empirical paper, EP participants were in the midst of another 'lockdown', with high workloads. I did not feel able to ask them for more of their time within this context.

6.2 Acquaintance interviews

In the literature, interviews are not viewed as an objective account of a participant's reality (e.g., Rapley, 2001). I played an active role, with participants, in the creation of meanings (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). I feel that in the interviews, co-categorical incumbency applied (Roulstron et al., 2001) because participants and I are members of the same group (EPs/TEP), employed by the same service and LA. This likely

resulted in my understanding and knowledge of the topics being discussed producing certain types of talk in the interviews.

In acquaintance interviews, I am an insider (Davies, 2007) with a prior relationship with participants. Thus, the data yielded could be viewed as a reflection of what was jointly constructed, mired in circumstance, desire, prejudice and judgement (McClure, 1993). Roberts & Sarangi (1999) explain that roles of participant and interviewee become 'laminated' onto relationships that existed previously. I recall feeling a little uncomfortable in my role as interviewer, because the role placed me in a more dominant position, contrasting with the power dynamics inherent in pre-existing relationships.

Garton & Copeland (2010) describe how in acquaintance interviews, there are layers of complexity. I identified with their assertion that there may be a need to work hard to reconcile diverse identities – I was a TEP, a junior colleague, but also 'in charge' of interviews as a researcher. Thus, much as I may have attempted to behave and speak in a nonbiased and facilitative manner, this was challenging to achieve (Ackroyd & Hughes, 1992, Rapley, 2004). As Rubin & Rubin (1995) posit, building rapport can be tricky. I feel that documenting my reflections around these factors fostered my developing competence in understanding the ethical issues stemming from such dual relationships (HCPC).

6.3 Non-verbal communication

A drawback of completing telephone interviews was that they provided me with no information on EPs' use of hand movements in emphasising words. Furthermore, they provided me with no information on the symbolic or emblematic gestures that EPs may well have used to provide meaning or information (Morris *et al.,* 1979). I was not able to pick up on any non-verbal clues from EPs on their emotions, motivations or intentions (Tipper *et al*., 2015).

The reader might well be asking at this point 'why didn't you use video calls?'. Ideally, I would have done this. However, the abysmal broadband speed then available to my premises, below 2 Mb per second, precluded their use. With the 'stay at home' government directive, there was no option to travel to alternative locations for improved connectivity.

6.4 My learning journey

My learning journey initially centred on a shift away from the more quantitative-leaning research that I had originally planned with a concurrent move towards an overwhelmingly qualitative approach. My ontological and epistemological position however remained: I am still a critical realist.

The most important things I have learned are to prepare, be organised, plan ahead, document thoughts, emotions and feelings in a reflective diary, anticipate issues, and take frequent breaks from working at screens. The emotions I experienced, from frustration to elation and everything in between, are likely to have affected this study (Gilbert, 2001, Hallowell *et al*., 2005). My sense of self (Lewin, 1935) has shifted, as my self-knowledge was reconstructed by the research process: I now view myself as a researcher.

In continuing my learning, when I become an EP, I have every intention of completing my original thesis research. The specialist setting has indicated that they are keen for me to do so and I have also received support from my service.

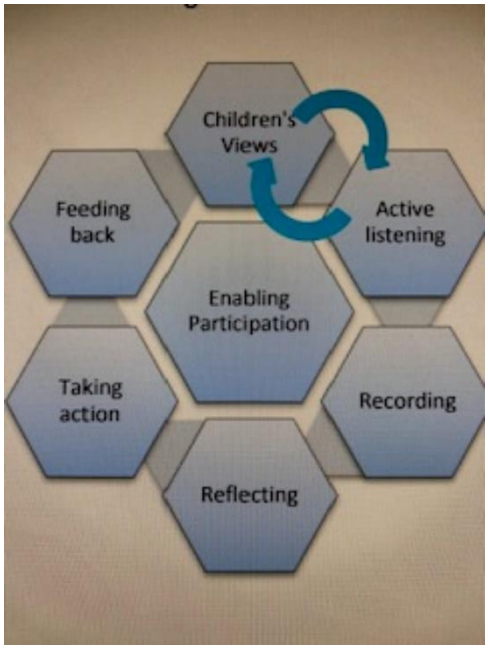
6.5 Contribution to the literature and implications for EP practice and service delivery

The study contributes to existing research on how EPs involve children in the SA process and the extent to which methods are consistent with previous studies. It builds on previous and recent research e.g., Jarret and N'Jie, (2019) in describing what tools and resources EPs used to both inform and to involve CYP. A number of the themes identified in this study were usefully related to findings in the research literature. For example, *openness* seems to relate to Howarth's (2016) suggestion that EPs explain their role and purpose to CYP.

Regarding EP perceptions on what might be changed to improve the SA process, the study contributed by adding to previous literature regarding the development and use of a wider range of visual and other non-verbal supports to help CYP to express their views and to support their understanding.

Clark & Williams' (2008) representation of participation cycles, below, illustrates how the views of CYP can be understood as an involvement cycle of initiation, continuation and informing of subsequent participation approaches.

Clark & Williams (2008) cycles of participation, adapted from Clark and Williams (2008, p.9)



I would assert that this model implies that EPs require ***more time*** when involving children and young people (CYP) in the SA process. It is my experience that active listening to CYP rests upon successfully establishing rapport, CYP being prepared for my visit, and appropriate tools or resources to support the CYP to communicate, which is itself dependent on me being provided with the correct information around *how* the CYP prefers to communicate. Thus, before an EP can even hope to access a CYP's views, these things need to happen first, and they all take time. Active listening itself requires time: paraphrasing, summarising and empathising. The recording of a CYP's views or involvement also takes time, whether this be done using pictures, symbols, art, verbally, or by any other method. Reflecting views, to check with the CYP that they are an accurate representation, also takes time. Taking action, based on the involvement and views of the CYP, moreover, requires more EP time. Finally, feeding back, be this to the CYP, their parents/carer, school, educational psychology service or LA, will take time.

Notwithstanding the impact of COVID-19 on EP practices in involving children in SA, findings from this study clearly suggests that EPs wish to embrace new tools and resources to facilitate communication, as well as develop processes to both involve CYP earlier and prepare them for the EP visit. It may well be that as a result of this research, the service may choose to make some changes.

I would tentatively suggest the following:

- develop a range (based on age/stage of development/SEN) of CYP- friendly introduction letters, which individual EPs can tailor, and a requirement that these are routinely used
- develop a range (based on age/stage of development/SEN) of CYP- friendly feedback letters, which individual EPs can tailor, and a requirement that these are routinely used
- in developing the above, *involve* CYP and incorporate their views

In line with the approach taken by Jarrett & N'jie (2019), the service may wish to develop a 'Pupil Voice Group' and complete a more detailed review of resources used by EPs. This might well lead to the sharing of resources between colleagues.

Yet there are other aspects which might still serve to restrict CYP's meaningful involvement, one being adults unwillingness or indeed fear in sharing power because this may put them in an uncomfortable position. How willing are EPs and other professionals 'higher up' in the service and LA, to share power, letting CYP influence outcomes and provision? What else might need to change and be developed in order to achieve coproduction with CYP and incorporate that into the service and LA, at all levels? There could be a need for significant fiscal investment, with backing from senior staff. To what extent would this be a priority given LA's probable focus on the pandemic and the financial fallout from this?

6.6 Discussion: how this study contributes to advancing of relevant psychological theories

The results of this study may add to self-determination theory (SDT, Deci and Ryan, 1985), specifically, the intersection between CYP's intrinsic motivation and their environment. It is feasible that by being appropriately involved and participating in

the SA process, as part of working with an EP, will positively impact CYP's self-determination. It would follow then, conversely, that if *not* appropriately involved, CYP may experience decreased motivation. The extent to which the acts of being listened to, heard, understood and 'taken seriously' by an EP impact on CYP's self-determination could usefully be explored by future research.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (19070a, 1970b) could potentially be expanded upon to include needs pertaining to being appropriately communicated *with* and being facilitated to communicate *to* others, i.e., both the receiving and providing of information, whether verbally or using alternative forms of communication, which I would anticipate be classified as a growth need.

6.7 Discussion: impact of the pandemic on ways of ensuring the involvement of CYP in the SA process

In the EPS within which this study was conducted, throughout the pandemic, EPs worked remotely during times of national 'lockdown', following guidelines issued by the Association of Educational Psychologists and by local authorities themselves. In team meetings and in conversations with my supervisor and peers, my understanding is that EPs and trainee EPs worked hard to develop alternative means of involving CYP, wherever possible. These all necessitated the use of both a reliable Internet connection and a suitable device upon which a CYP could interact with the EP and any resources, materials or tools the EP might use.

I attempted to use visuals from a 'talking mat' with a child, remotely; however, this failed due to the child viewing the visuals on a mobile phone rather than a laptop. I had to fall back onto use of verbal elicitation activities. This anecdotal experience serves to illustrate how social inequalities may exacerbate difficulties with involving and ensuring appropriate participation from certain CYP, specifically, those without adequate devices and/or reliable Internet connection. Here, I am very starkly reminded of the link with poverty.

In my study, I chose to survey and interview EPs on their experiences of involving and ensuring participation of CYP *prior to* the pandemic. Given that it appears, at the time of writing, that Covid-19 may never disappear, it seems entirely feasible that

EPs may continue to work with CYP according to a 'hybrid' or mixture of practice, comprising some face to face and some remote direct work with CYP. When working remotely, there are a range of additional factors that EPs need to take into consideration: the level of privacy available to CYP when interacting with an EP remotely, restrictions on the remote use of certain materials/tools/resources, the level of technical skills within CYP's parents/carers/family in terms of accessing various activities EP may choose and access to Internet services and devices, to name but a few. Future research may usefully explore how EPs have developed new and creative methods for involving CYP in SA processes.

6.6 Proposed dissemination

This study will be shared with my educational psychology service (EPS). At a Continuing Professional Development day between September 2021 and July 2022, I will be presenting a summary of my study to all colleagues who work in the EPS. The empirical paper will be shared with participants and the PEP. My thesis may be available to the public via my university's website. The study may be published in the journal *Educational Psychology in Practice*: it has been written in accordance with their writing guidelines.

6.7 Suggestions for further research

Future research may usefully explore UK-wide EP practice in involving CYP and promoting their participation in SA assessments. Are the enabling/restricting factors identified in this small study echoed by EPs across the UK, or do they reflect this particular context? The extent to which EPs feel the SA process can be *concurrently both* enabling and restricting could be usefully explored further in future research.

How much, if at all, CYP are prepared in advance of meeting the EP would seem to be an important area to study in more detail, again, in a larger scale study. Following this, professional bodies such as the Association of Educational Psychologists and the Division of Educational and Child Psychology might issue professional guidelines on suggested evidence-based and best practice in fully involving, preparing and

ensuring CYP participation. I would anticipate that the publication of such guidelines would promote consistency across the UK.

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APPENDIX A:

EP INVITATION AND INFORMATION LETTER, & CONSENT FORM

Hester Howells

Trainee Educational Psychologist, Doctorate in Educational Psychology

30th May, 2020

Faculty of Education
School of Lifelong Learning

University of East Anglia

Norwich Research Park

Norwich NR4 7TJ

Title of study: Educational Psychologists' perceptions of enabling and restricting factors affecting children's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT – *Educational Psychologists*

(1) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about **EPs views on how they involve children/young people in statutory assessments and the tools they use to facilitate involvement.**

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are an EP with EPS.

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling me that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your information as described.
- ✓ You have received a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researcher:
Hester Howells, Trainee Educational Psychologist, EdPsyD Student at UEA.

Supervisor – Dr Andrea Honess, research tutor & co-course director

(3) What will the study involve for me?

Part 1

This involves you completing a **survey questionnaire**, which has 6 questions. This will be sent to your work email address and you'll reply by email to the researcher. You will be asked to provide typed descriptive answers to these 6 questions, in your own words. This should take between 15 and 30 minutes to complete.

Your name will **not** be recorded, **nor** will any personal data about you be recorded. You will be given a participant number so that what you write will be anonymous. The information you give in the survey questionnaire will be analysed.

Part 2

At the end of the survey questionnaire, there is an opt-in box that you may tick if you wish to. This asks if you wish to be a participant in a **remotely-completed individual interview** with the researcher, giving you an opportunity to voice any views you may have in more detail. This will last up to 30 minutes.

The interview will be completed remotely, using your laptop / work mobile phone (phone, Teams or WhatsApp), on a mutually convenient date and time that is agreed in advance.

During the interview, the researcher will review your responses to the survey questionnaire and give you space to add any other views you may have.

Your name will **not** be recorded, **nor** will any personal data about you be recorded. You will be given a participant number so that what you say will be anonymous. The information generated in the interview will be audio recorded, then transcribed and analysed.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?

The study will take up between approximately 15 minutes to one hour of your time.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is *completely voluntary* and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia. You won't be able to withdraw after the data has been transcribed/ analysed.

(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

The researcher will treat you and all participants equally and respectfully at all times, and ensure that you have plenty of opportunity to voice your opinions during the interview.
Talking about feelings on involving children/young people might bring up a range of emotions on the statutory process and how it is currently. The researcher will be attentive to you and your well -being at all times, and will be available at the end of the interview for individual discussion.

(7) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

It is anticipated that you may perceive a benefit in that your views on including children/young people's views in the statutory process are being heard. This may benefit you in terms of facilitating reflective and reflexive practice. You will hopefully feel listened to and may relish the opportunity to provide feedback on existing procedures. You will be given opportunity to make suggestions as to how you feel the procedures might be improved. This process could empower you to feel that you can influence how future procedures might be developed.

The study might benefit the SLT and wider County Council by providing valuable feedback on how EPs feel children/young people might be more meaningfully involved in the statutory assessment process.

(8) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

The information that will be collected from you and used in the study is <u>strictly limited.</u>

For EPs completing the **survey questionnaire** only (part 1), information collected from you and used in the study will consist of what you type in the response boxes.

For EPs completing the **survey questionnaire** (part 1) and **the interview** (part 2), information collected from you and used in the study will consist of what you type in the response boxes and what you say in the interview.

For parts 1 and 2, no personal or identifying information is taken. You will be given a number to preserve your anonymity.

For part 2, the interview will be recorded (audio) and the recording will only be used for transcription. Transcripts (<u>anonymous</u>) may be seen by the UEA course team, internal or external moderators.

The study results will be written in a 25,000-40,000 word Doctoral Thesis and submitted to the UEA as part of the researcher's Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

A short feedback report will be made available to all EPs and EPS SLT in the service, by August 2021. The report may be published in the Council research bulletin. The researcher will present a brief overview of the results of the study at the Service's annual CPD day in September, 2021.

Information from the study will be stored securely for the duration of the study in line with UEA policies and after the study, information will be securely kept by the UEA.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to the researcher collecting survey questionnaire (part 1) and interview (part 2) information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2019).

Your information will be stored securely and will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law.

(9) What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Hester will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Hester via email *h.howells@uea.ac.uk*

(10) Will I be told the results of the study?

Yes. You will receive a short feedback report. You have the right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can access feedback by reading the report that will be emailed to you. You can access this feedback after 30.8.2021.

(11) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem, please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:

Hester Howells

School of Education and Lifelong Learning

University of East Anglia

NORWICH NR4 7TJ

h.howells@uea.ac.uk

If you would like to speak to someone else, you can contact my supervisor:

a.honess@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Professor Nalini Boodhoo at N.Boodhoo@uea.ac.uk.

(12) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

You need to fill in one copy of the consent form, below and email it to *h.howells@uea.ac.uk* Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so.
✓ The researcher has answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.
I understand I can withdraw from the study at any time prior to the survey questionnaire information being analysed (part 1) or the recording of the interview (part 2) being analysed.

✓ I understand that information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Completing a survey questionnaire** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Completing an interview** YES ☐ NO ☐

- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?**
  YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your email address:

☐ Email: _____

.....

Signature

....

PRINT name

.....

Date

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (2nd Copy to participant)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so.
✓ The researcher has answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.
I understand I can withdraw from the study at any time prior to the survey questionnaire information being analysed (part 1) or the recording of the interview (part 2) being analysed.

✓ I understand that information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.

✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Completing a survey questionnaire** YES ☐ NO ☐

- **Completing an interview** YES ☐ NO ☐

- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?**
  YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your email address:

☐ Email: _____

.....

Signature

....

PRINT name

.....

Date

APPENDIX B

Interview question prompts:

How did you find the survey?

Go through EPs survey responses;

For question 1, How do you *typically involve* children/young people in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?, you said …. (summarise/paraphrase given responses) for Key stages.

Supplementary Qs – what did you mean by …..

Just checking I am understanding, could you explain a bit more about …..

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

For question 2, Which approaches / tools / techniques / strategies do you often use when gathering children/young people's views?, you said ….(summarise/paraphrase given responses) for Key stages.

Supplementary Qs – what did you mean by …..

Just checking I am understanding, could you explain a bit more about …..

When might you use scaling/puppets/visuals (specific tool)?

What might that look like?

Are there any other tools you use?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

For question 3, What factors do you feel are *enabling* in securing children / young people's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?, you indicated that ……

Could you describe a bit more about ……

How do you feel xxx helps?

Have you had any feedback from service users?

For question 4, what factors do you feel *are restrictive* in securing children / young people's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?, you wrote that ……

Can you explain a bit more about what you meant by….

How has this impacted you / CYP?

So you wrote about xxx, does that link to xxxx, or XX, or to something else?

In question 5, to what extent do you feel that statutory assessment processes and procedures *enable you* to take a person-centred approach?, you indicated that …..

Are you able to tell me any more about this?

Am I right in thinking this means…..

Do these …. Relate to any of the things you said earlier….

How often have you seen this?

For the final question 6, how would things *be different* to enable children / young people to express their views more fully?, you described ….

Is there anything you'd like to add to this?

Does this mean…..

What could it look like in practice?

Is there anything else that would need to change to facilitate this?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me that I haven't asked you?

Do you have any questions about the study?

APPENDIX C

EXAMPLES OF HOW DATA WAS COLLATED UNDER CODES & THEMES

Research question 2 *– factors identified by EPs as enabling CYP involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes*

THEME 2: EPs' PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Data excerpts

But perhaps more than anything just being attuned to the CYP

EP1 line 30

I mean, if I'm honest, that's (PC working) what I think EPs do EP1 line 117

it goes without saying, almost line EP1 line 121

Every assessment, including statutory, they (EPs) are really trying to see things from the child's point of view, as much as possible EP1 line 138

For each of them, they're quite individual EP4 line 12

it's having flexibility and for me, EP4 line 26

engaging them in that drawing, um EP4 line 167

it's that sort of collaborative nature line EP4 line 171

I think to get the child's voice, you know, we need to do *with them*

And be collaborative EP4 lines 177/179

It can just be you know, setting the scene, or or getting the right atmosphere, or environment for that child to start to share their views EP4 lines 188/190

Who is the dominant person in this, who is, who is… has that role, that position of power there…And if we can just equalise it or ..Shift the balance so that that child feels like it's, it's them that're in the driving seat

You know, I'll sit on the floor, I'll do whatever, I'll layout my sheet of paper, I'll scrabble around and er EP4 lines 207/205/203/199

I’ve got lots of things that I might want to pull out

EP4 line 211

You’ve got to be flexible, really in our approaches

EP4 line 312

There are so many lovely tools out there

EP6 line 167

Well, again, I make a judgement, how do I know if this child likes drawing for a start

EP6 line 240

Strength based approach

EP2 survey

Establishing feeling of safety/trust/rapport

EP3 survey

Codes:

EPs promote attunement with CYP

EPs promote CYP to feel safe

EPs pre-reflect before working with CYP

EPs prioritise building trust/rapport with CYP

EPs use strength-based (psychological) approaches

EPs tailor their approach/s with CYP

EPs have a range of tools / resources they can use to support CYP

EPs demonstrate flexibility in how approach work with CYP

EPs have suitable tools with them on visits

EPs practice so as to reduce power imbalances

EPs practice to empower CYP

EPs will get on CYP's (physical) level

EPs do activities (psychology) *with* CYP

EPs work collaboratively

PC working viewed as a key part of EP role

Appendix C1: Latent codes derived from research questions of qualitative strand

RSQ2A - enabling factors codes

EP demonstrates attunement with CYP

checking information with CYP

shared meaning

openly curious

visuals/symbols to aid CYP

Person centred meetings

sufficient time with CYP

private and safe space to meet CYP

timing of meeting with CYP

EP helps CYP to feel safe

EP pre-reflects before meeting the CYP

EP builds trust/rapport with CYP

EP uses strengths-based psychological approaches

EP Taylor is their approach, based on their judgement

EP selects from a range of tools/resources to support CYP

EP has a flexible approach

EP has suitable tools

EP reduces power imbalances

EP empowers CYP

EP gets on CYP's level

EP does activities *with* CYP

collaborative

Person centred work = key EP role

EP facilitates CYP to give information

EP advocates for CYP in SA report

RSQ2B - restricting factors codes

Insufficient time with CYP

EP under pressure to produce SA report

CYP not involved in decision making

SA process itself

insufficient quality of information for EP (referral)

insufficient quantity of information for EP (referral)

insufficient time negatively impacts practice - incomplete picture of CYP

resources/tools demand EP spends time with CYP that may not be available

CYP refuses to engage with EP

CYP's preferred method of communication not always known

CYP not informed EP is visiting

cumbersome/confusing EHC process

CYP not present at planning meetings

CYP don't receive advance information

CYP aren't prepared prior to meeting EP

CYP may not be aware why they are being asked for their views

CYP may not be aware of the process

information provided to EP can be inaccurate (referral)

EP preparation depends on receiving accurate information from others

EP can be unaware of settings protocols

EP lacks knowledge of settings context

inappropriate space offered for EP to work with CYP

information omitted in referral

EP not always informed of CYP's needs – impact selection of tools

adults narratives override CYP's

adults agendas influence information

adults influence decision-making

parents disagree with their child

CYP's voice can be marginalised in referral

vested interests of adults

RSQ3 - codes

redesign referral form and questions CYP are asked: make it CYP friendly

include images and examples in the referral form

letters to CYP – differentiated for age/stage of development/needs

Prepare CYP prior to gathering their views on referral form

explain the EP role to CYP in advance of meeting

CYP being involved before senco makes referral

EP desire for a range of person centred tools for them to select from

EPs aware of a range of good tools available

EPS needs a wider range of tools/resources

involve CYP in EHC plan drafting

the more knowledge and prepared CYP is, the more interested in outcomes they are

increase the accessibility of the end product

make CYP aware of provision available

make CYP aware of support available

involve CYP different ways over time

Elicit examples of success from CYP

2+ meetings with CYP

a range of differentiated resources/tools

person centred planning meetings – SA report from this

support CYP to express what they would like to get better at

support CYP to express what they like to be different

support CYP to express how they'd like to be helped/supported

EPS service should gather data regarding how EPs involve CYP

EPS should develop more person centred methods of working

EPS should develop agreed minimum person centred standards for EPs in service = guidelines for EPs

Offer EPs training in person centred working methods/tools

use videos/photography

do live planning with CYP's part as a wiki

APPENDIX D: THEME DEFINITIONS

Research question 2 – factors identified by EPs as **enabling** CYP involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes

THEME 1 OPENESS	**THEME 2 EPs' PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**	**THEME 3 FACILITATING COMMMUNICATION**	**THEME 4 PRACTICALITIES**
EPs perceived CYP involvement is facilitated when they understand the SA process / the EP role, are informed (prepared) in advance and when the EP has opportunities to check information with CYP.	CYP involvement was perceived to be facilitated by EPs' skills such as pre-reflecting on how to involve CYP, by demonstrating curiosity, attunement and by supporting CYP to feel confident to communicate. These factors were felt to help the EP act in the CYP's best interests. This theme also	EPs' perceived that to enable CYP involvement, their preferred methods of communication, including the use of appropriate tools, often comprising visuals, needed to be established and utilised.	EPs' perceptions centred on environment-specific variables, such as having sufficient time to work with a CYP, a carefully timed visit, in an environment that the CYP feels safe in.

	relates to perceptions regarding the importance of establishing trust, and by practicing in a manner so as to equalise power.		

Research question 2 – factors identified by EPs as **restricting** CYP involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes

THEME DESCRIPTIONS

Theme 1 Time and process	**Theme 2 CYP preparedness**	**Theme 3 Availability of information**	**Theme 4 Powerful non-CYP voices' influence**
EPs' perceived that SA work is time pressured, and feel they often have insufficient time with each CYP. The SA process is perceived as cumbersome, with CYP not typically involved with decision making and planning around outcomes.	EPs perceived CYP may not understand the SA process and are not adequately prepared to meet the EP, which might lead to lack of engagement. CYP may not express how they would like to be supported, nor be aware of the provision available to them.	There was an EP perception that both the quality/quantity of information available prior to meeting CYP can be lacking, affecting how the EP approaches involving CYP. EPs felt they lacked information on the school setting context and CYP's preferred methods of communication.	EPs' perceived difficulties arising from when non-CYP 'voices' impinge on the SA process, which can interfere with fully involving CYP. EPs' perceived that adults maintain a 'we know best' attitude which can be disempowering for CYP and impacts on their self-advocacy.

Research question 3 – how EPs perceive the process might be different to promote fuller CYP involvement.

THEME DESCRIPTIONS

Theme 1 Prepare CYP & involve them earlier in the process	**Theme 2 Increase the time and tools available to EPs**	**Theme 3 Involve CYP in planning & aware of provision options**	**Theme 4 Develop the SA process**

	to facilitate CYP involvement		
EPs spoke of a desire to better prepare CYP, with letters, information sheets and videos, at an earlier stage. These measures were perceived as giving CYP time to think and process, and be more invested, leading to better outcomes.	EPs' perceived that more time, ideally two opportunities to meet with CYP, would facilitate their involvement, together with a range of differentiated CYP-friendly resources, comprising a 'PC toolbox'.	There was an EP perception that planning should be collaborative, aided by space being made to 'hear' CYP 'voices', by use of Person-Centred meetings. This theme also relates to CYP being better informed on provision available.	EPs felt the process could be developed to include the use of photographic and video contributions from CYP, by making forms more CYP friendly and by prioritising Person-Centred meetings, as a basis for the SA report. Developing a procedure and record form for EPs to illustrate how they involved CYP, and auditing these, were suggested.

APPENDIX E

ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

EDU ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER 2019-20

APPLICANT DETAILS	
Name:	Hester Howells
School:	EDU
Current Status:	**EdPsyD student**
UEA Email address:	**Hester.howells@uea.ac.uk**
EDU REC IDENTIFIER:	**2020_5_HH_AH**

Approval details	

Approval start date:	**28.5.2020**
Approval end date:	**30.5.2021**
Specific requirements of approval:	Please ensure only 'clean' versions of the Participant Information and Consent Forms are sent out – at the moment they have track changes on them). Also please update the UEA Data Management Policy to 2019.
Please note that your project is only given ethical approval for the length of time identified above. Any extension to a project must obtain ethical approval by the EDU REC before continuing. Any amendments to your project in terms of design, sample, data collection, focus etc. should be notified to the EDU REC Chair as soon as possible to ensure ethical compliance. If the amendments are substantial a new application may be required.	

EDU Chair, Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX E1: UEA ETHICAL APPROVAL APPLICATION FORM

UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

This form is for all staff and students across the UEA who are planning educational research. Applicants are advised to consult the school and university guidelines before preparing their application by visiting https://www.uea.ac.uk/research/our-research-integrity and exploring guidance on specific types of projects https://portal.uea.ac.uk/rin/research-integrity/research-ethics/research-ethics-policy. The Research Ethics page of the EDU website provides links to the University Research Ethics Committee, the UEA ethics policy guidelines, ethics guidelines from BERA and the ESRC, and guidance notes and templates to support your application process: https://www.uea.ac.uk/education/research/research-ethics.

Applications must be approved by the Research Ethics Committee before beginning data generation or approaching potential research participants.

- Staff and PGR (PhD, EdD, and EdPsyD) should submit their forms to the EDU REC Administrator (edu.support@uea.ac.uk) and Dr Kate Russell (Kate.russell@uea.ac.uk) at least two weeks prior to each meeting.
- **Undergraduate students and other students must follow the procedures determined by their course of study.**

APPLICANT DETAILS	
Name:	Hester Howells
School:	EDU
Current Status:	**EdPsyD student**
UEA Email address:	**Hester.howells@uea.ac.uk**
If PGR, MRes, or EdD/EdPsyD student, name of primary supervisor and programme of study:	
Dr Andrea Honess: Doctorate in Educational Psychology	

The following paperwork must be submitted to EDU REC **BEFORE** the application can be approved. Applications with missing/incomplete sections will be returned to the applicant for submission at the next EDU REC meeting. Please combine the forms into **ONE** PDF	
Required paperwork	**✓Applicant Tick to confirm**
Application Form (fully completed)	✓
Participant Information sheet and Consent Form (EDU template appropriate for nature of participants i.e. adult/parent/carer etc.)	✓

Other supporting documents (for e.g. questionnaires, interview/focus group questions, stimulus materials, observation checklists, letters of invitation, recruitment posters etc)	✓

2. PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT DETAILS:	
Title:	An exploration of Educational Psychologists' perceptions of enabling and restricting factors affecting children's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes
Start/End Dates:	July 2020 – Easter /May 2021 (data collection & analysis)

3. FUNDER DETAILS (IF APPLICABLE):	
Funder:	NA
Will ethical approval also be sought for this project from another source? YES	
	If "yes" what is this source? Norfolk County Council

4. APPLICATION FORM FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS:

Please use the guidance notes to support your application as this can clarify what the committee needs to see about your project and can avoid any unnecessary requests for further information at a later date.

4.1 Briefly outline, using lay language, your research focus and questions or aims (no more than 300 words).

The research aims to reveal practices and the breadth of approaches used currently by EPs in the Local Authority (LA) in terms of involving children/young people in the process of statutory assessments. It will determine how EPs in this LA feel they typically involve children in statutory assessments, e.g., tools, approaches and strategies used with various age groups. In this context, involvement means pupil views contributing the Psychological Advice and Education and Health Care Plans being co-constructed with children where possible. It will explore the extent to which EPs feel statutory assessment processes and procedures enable them to take a person-centred approach. The definition of 'person-centred' for this context will be included in the survey questionnaire. EP perceptions of factors that enable / restrict children's involvement in the statutory

assessment process and outcomes will be sought. Finally, the research will look to elicit EPs views on what they feel may need to change to facilitate CYP to be more fully involved in the future.

The invitation to participate in the research will be emailed to all EPs employed by the LA service. Part 1 constitutes a survey questionnaire (6 questions) with part 2 comprising a remotely-completed individual interview, where participants have the opportunity to discuss their survey questionnaire responses in more depth and / or add any other views they may have.

The Local Authority (LA) Joint Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP) is supportive and has encouraged the researcher to develop the proposal. The research ties in with the LA's 'Strategic Plan', as well as national policy (Code of Practice, 2015) regarding using person-centered approaches to involve children in statutory assessments.

Research questions:

1. How do EPs in one Local Authority involve CYP in statutory assessments?

2. What do EPs in one Local Authority perceive are enabling and restricting factors in fully involving CYP in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?

3. How might the process be different in the future to promote fuller involvement of children?

4.2 Briefly outline your proposed research methods, including who will be your research participants and where you will be working (no more than 300 words).

- **Please provide details of any relevant demographic detail of participants (age, gender, race, ethnicity etc)**

Participants will be between 6-17 EPs. No demographic details or names will be collected. EPs will be invited to complete a survey questionnaire via email. The survey will be attached to an email (word document) to the EPs. At the end of the survey questionnaire is an opt in box, which participants can tick if they wish to take part in a short individual (remote) interview. Each EP will be assigned a number. Completed surveys will be returned to the researcher via email. Thematic analysis will be used to analyse the qualitative data. The researcher will be working from home, or from the workplace at the LA (depending on restrictions due to COVID-19). At least 6 EP participants will be required for part 1 (survey questionnaire) and ideally up to 6 for part 2 (interview).

For details of the survey questions, please see the appendix.

4.3 Briefly explain how you plan to gain access to prospective research participants. (no more than 300 words).

- **Who might be your gatekeeper for accessing participants?**
- **If children/young people (or other vulnerable people, such as people with mental illness) are to be involved, give details of how gatekeeper permission will be obtained. Please provide any relevant documentation (letters of invite, emails etc) that might be relevant**
- **Is there any sense in which participants might be 'obliged' to participate – as in the case of pupils, friends, fellow students, colleagues, prisoners or patients – or are volunteers being recruited?**

The gatekeeper for accessing participants is the Joint Principal Educational Psychologist, who is the researcher's line manager. The service's EP team email database will be accessed in order to send the email to EPs.

Participants will be invited to complete the survey by email. It is not anticipated that EPs will feel obliged to participate, as both the invitation and participant information sheet clearly demonstrates. EPs are made aware that participation is non-compulsory and they have a choice to decline the invitation.

4.4 Please state who will have access to the data and what measures will be adopted to maintain the confidentiality or anonymity of the research subject and to comply with data protection requirements e.g. how will the data be anonymised? (No more than 300 words.)

Access to data will be restricted to the researcher and her research supervisor. Confidentiality will be maintained by the researcher not collecting EP's names or any identifying information. Each EP will be assigned a number.

The researcher has completed GDPR and County-Council required training on protection of data. The researcher will be following research governance regulations. All data will be kept in a locked and secure location in the researcher's placement location or the researcher's home office, both of which are locked out of office hours. The researcher will adhere to both University and Local Authority regulations on the collecting, processing, and storing of data.

Participants will be assured of anonymity. The researcher **will not** collect sensitive data e.g. date of birth, address, gender, religious or sexual orientation, socio-economic group, etc.

4.5 Will you require access to data on participants held by a third party? In cases where participants will be identified from information held by another party (for example, a doctor or school) describe the arrangements you intend to make to gain access to this information (no more than 300 words).

No.

4.6 Please give details of how consent is to be obtained (no more than 300 words).

Identify here the method by which consent will be obtained for each participant group e.g. through information sheets and consent forms, oral or other approach. Copies of all forms should be submitted alongside the application form (do not include the text of these documents in this space).

- **How and when will participants receive this material and how will you collect forms back in?**

Consent will be obtained in writing by email, from each participant. The invitation email (see appendix) emphasises the voluntary nature of the study and outline possible benefits.

Each potential participant will be emailed the participant information sheet and consent form. This will happen within a working week of the researcher receiving approval from UEA (EDU Ethics Committee) and from the researcher's host placement service (County Council Governance Application). Forms will be returned to the researcher's UEA email address.

4.7 If any payment or incentive will be made to any participant, please explain what it is and provide the justification (no more than 300 words).

No.

4.8 What is the anticipated use of the data, forms of publication and dissemination of findings etc.? (No more than 300 words.)

The data will be used as the basis for the researcher to write their thesis for a Doctorate in Educational Psychology. The data may be discussed with the researcher's research supervisor and course tutor. The university may make the thesis available online. The researcher will use the data to present the findings of the study to the Local Authority's Educational Psychology and Specialist Services staff at an annual Continuing Professional Development day in 2021. This will be a brief overview of the study.

The researcher will communicate the research results (in layman's terms) to participants and the host placement Leadership team. This brief report may be published in the authority 'bulletin', a quarterly bulletin sent to all schools in the authority.

The researcher anticipates that the anonymous data *may* be used for publication.

4.9 Findings of this research/project would usually be made available to participants. Please provide details of the form and timescale for feedback. What commitments will be made to participants regarding feedback? How will these obligations be verified? If findings are not to be provided to participants, explain why. (No more than 300 words.)

The researcher will fully inform participants about the study and its results. The researcher will write a brief summary report for participants and the senior leadership team. This will be made available to them by 30th August, 2021. This will be available to them via email.

4.10 Please add here any other ethical considerations the ethics committee may need to be made aware of (no more than 300 words).

- **Are there any issues here for who can or cannot participate in the project?**
- **If you are conducting research in a space where individuals may also choose not to participate, how will you ensure they will not be included in any data collection or adversely affected by non-participation? An example of this might be in a classroom where observation and video recording of a new teaching strategy is being assessed. If consent for all students to be videoed is not received, how will you ensure that a) those children will not be videoed and/or b) that if they are removed from that space, that they are not negatively affected by that?**

Only fully qualified Educational Psychologists who work for the authority are eligible to participate.

4.11 What risks or costs to the participants are entailed in involvement in the research/project and how will you manage that risk?

- **Are there any potential physical, psychological or disclosure dangers that can be anticipated? What is the possible harm to the participant or society from their participation or from the project as a whole?**
- **What procedures have been established for the care and protection of participants (e.g. insurance, medical cover, counselling or other support) and the control of any information gained from them or about them?**

Informed consent

A participation Information Sheet (PIS) will be emailed to all potential participants to help them understand the studies' implications. EP participants will clearly understand that they can choose not to be part of the study and that they can withdraw at any point up to data being analysed. They will understand what their role is within the study, what they will do if they say yes, and what will happen to research data.

EPs will have clear understanding that they enter into the research of their own accord and can withdraw at any point up to data being analysed. EP views will be listened to. The researcher will

do everything to promote each EP's best interests and not do anything that may cause any EP harm.

The PIS emphasise that the researcher is a Trainee Educational Psychologist, supervised by a fully qualified Educational Psychologist, and that she will only complete work and research that is within her level of competence.

The researcher acknowledges that they will be working within a number of different and possibly **competing constraints**. These include: practical constraints (time available, ongoing impact of COVID-19), institutional (the researcher may be influenced by UEA, the LA), legal (British Psychological Society, Health Care Professions Council) and ethical (autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice).

For autonomy, careful writing of the PIS for EPs helps them to fully understand the study, and enables them to be in a position to freely consent (or not), without worry that they might be disadvantaged if they refuse. The PIS make it clear what EPs will be asked to do, and what will happen to information about them.

Non-maleficence relates to the researcher anticipating and taking reasonable steps to avoid causing anyone pain, incapacitation, offense or suffering. By using familiar means of communication (word document via email for survey, Teams/WhatsApp for interviews), it is hoped these atmosphere will be conductive to a pleasant experience for EPs.

Beneficence means that the researcher will make it clear to EPs in the PIS the potential benefits of participating, as well as outlining any anticipated risks, and if benefits outweigh risks.

Justice puts a duty of care on the researcher, aligning with their own values and beliefs, to treat all EPs in a fair and equal manner.

The researcher will treat EPs with the utmost respect, and will listen to and take account of their needs and wishes. No EP will be discriminated against for any reason.

Risk analysis

The researcher has worked to identify and minimise any risks to EPs. The researcher has carefully thought through each stage of the proposed research to identify and mitigate risk. Two ethics applications will be completed.

4.12 What is the possible benefit to the participant or society from their participation or from the project as a whole?

It is anticipated that EPs may perceive a benefit in that their views on including children/young people's views in the statutory process are being heard. This may benefit them in terms of facilitating reflective and reflexive practice. EPs will hopefully feel listened to and may relish the opportunity to provide feedback on existing procedures. EPs will be given opportunity to make suggestions as to they

you feel the procedures might be improved. This process could empower them to feel that they can influence how future procedures might be developed.

The study might benefit the SLT and wider authority by providing valuable feedback on how EPs feel children/young people might be more meaningfully involved in the statutory assessment process.

4.13 Comment on any cultural, social or gender-based characteristics of the participants which have affected the design of the project or which may affect its conduct. This may be particularly relevant if conducting research overseas or with a particular cultural group

- **You should also comment on any cultural, social or gender-based characteristics of you as the researcher that may also affect the design of the project or which may affect its conduct**

None anticipated.

4.14 Does your research have environmental implications? Please refer to the University's Research Ethics Guidance Note: Research with a Potential Impact on the Environment for further details. Identify any significant environmental impacts arising from your research/project and the measures you will take to minimise risk of impact.

None anticipated.

4.15 Will your research involve investigation of or engagement with terrorist or violent extremist groups? Please provide a full explanation if the answer is 'yes'.

NO

4.16 Please state any precautions being taken to protect your health and safety? This relates to all projects and *not just* those undertaken overseas.

- **What health and safety or other relevant protocols need to be followed e.g. a DBS for work in schools? Have you completed this?**
- **If you are travelling to conduct your research, have you taken out travel and health insurance for the full period of the research? If not, why not.**
- **If you are travelling overseas, have you read and acted upon FCO travel advice (https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)? If not, why not. If acted upon, how?**
- **Provide details including the date that you have accessed information from FCO or other relevant organization**
- **If you are undertaking field work overseas you are required to submit a Risk Assessment Form with your application. This is even if you are a researcher 'going home' to collect data (check EDU REC website).**

The researcher has DBS and the authority has a copy. The researcher is familiar with the authority health & safety and fire regulations.

The researcher will have regular tutorials with a research supervisor and have opportunities to discuss any concerns relating to personal health and safety.

4.17 Please state any precautions being taken to protect the health and safety of other researchers and others associated with the project (as distinct from the participants or the applicant).

None anticipated.

4.18 The UEA's staff and students will seek to comply with travel and research guidance provided by the British Government and the Governments (and Embassies) of host countries. This pertains to research permission, in-country ethical clearance, visas, health and safety information, and other travel advisory notices where applicable. If this research project is being undertaken outside the UK, has formal permission/a research permit been sought to conduct this research? Please describe the action you have taken and if a formal permit has not been sought please explain why this is not necessary/appropriate (for very short studies it is not always appropriate to apply for formal clearance, for example).

Not applicable

4.19 Are there any procedures in place for external monitoring of the research, for instance by a funding agency?

Not applicable.

5. DECLARATION:

Please complete the following boxes with YES, NO, or NOT APPLICABLE:

I have read (and discussed with my supervisor if student) the University's Research Ethics Policy, Principle and Procedures, and consulted the British Educational Research Association's Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research and other available documentation on the EDU Research Ethics webpage and, when appropriate, the BACP Guidelines for Research Ethics.	YES
I am aware of the relevant sections of the GDPR (2018): https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/ and Freedom of Information Act (2005).	YES
Data gathering activities involving schools and other organizations will be carried out only with the agreement of the head of school/organization, or an authorised representative, and after adequate notice has been given.	YES
The purpose and procedures of the research, and the potential benefits and costs of participating (e.g. the amount of their time involved), will be fully explained to prospective research participants at the outset.	YES
My full identity will be revealed to potential participants.	YES
Prospective participants will be informed that data collected will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be reported in anonymised form unless identified explicitly and agreed upon	YES
All potential participants will be asked to give their explicit, written consent to participating in the research, and, where consent is given, separate copies of this will be retained by both researcher and participant.	YES
In addition to the consent of the individuals concerned, the signed consent of a parent/carer will be required to sanction the participation of minors (i.e. persons under 16 years of age).	YES
Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or institutions to participate in research activities.	YES
The treatment of potential research participants will in no way be prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the project.	YES
I will provide participants with my UEA contact details (*not* my personal contact details) and those of my supervisor (if applicable), in order that they are able to make contact in relation to any aspect of the research, should they wish to do so. I will notify participants that complaints can be made to the Head of School.	YES
Participants will be made aware that they may freely withdraw from the project at any time without risk or prejudice.	YES

Research will be carried out with regard for mutually convenient times and negotiated in a way that seeks to minimise disruption to schedules and burdens on participants	YES
At all times during the conduct of the research I will behave in an appropriate, professional manner and take steps to ensure that neither myself nor research participants are placed at risk.	YES
The dignity and interests of research participants will be respected at all times, and steps will be taken to ensure that no harm will result from participating in the research	YES
The views of all participants in the research will be respected.	YES
Special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, sex, religion and sexual orientation, amongst research participants, when planning, conducting and reporting on the research.	YES
Data generated by the research (e.g. transcripts of research interviews) will be kept in a safe and secure location and will be used purely for the purposes of the research project (including dissemination of findings). No-one other than research colleagues, professional transcribers and supervisors will have access to any identifiable raw data collected, unless written permission has been explicitly given by the identified research participant.	YES
Research participants will have the right of access to any data pertaining to them.	YES
All necessary steps will be taken to protect the privacy and ensure the anonymity and non-traceability of participants – e.g. by the use of pseudonyms, for both individual and institutional participants, in any written reports of the research and other forms of dissemination.	YES

I am satisfied that all ethical issues have been identified and that satisfactory procedures are in place to deal with those issues in this research project. I will abide by the procedures described in this form.

Name of Applicant:	**HESTER HOWELLS**
Date:	**21/5/2020**

PGR/EdD/EdPsyD/MRes Supervisor declaration (for PGR/EdD/EdPsyD/MRes student research only)

I have discussed the ethics of the proposed research with the student and am satisfied that all ethical issues have been identified and that satisfactory procedures are in place to deal with those issues in this research project.

Name of PGR Supervisor:	**DR ANDREA HONESS**
Date:	**21/5/2020**

Survey Questions:

Question 1

How do you *typically involve* children/young people in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?

Please use the table below to describe how you involve children / young people at various Key Stages (KS).

KS 0 (EYFS, age 3-5)	KS 1 (Y1-2, age 5-7)	KS 2 (Y3-6, age 7-11)	KS 3 (Y7-9, age 11-14)	KS 4 (Y10-11, age 14-16)	KS 5 (Y12-13, age 16-18)	Above KS5 (age 18-25)	Any com

Question 2

Which approaches / tools / techniques / strategies do you often use when gathering

children/young people's views?

Examples: (not an exhaustive or prescriptive list): talking mats, blob tree,

conversation (informal/structured), observation, cue cards, scaling tools, solution-focused questions, Personal Construct approaches, puppets, subject picture cards, externalisation cards, one-page profiles.

Please use the table below to describe how you work with various Key Stages (KS).

KS 0 (EYFS, age 3-5)	KS 1 (Y1-2, age 5-7)	KS 2 (Y3-6, age 7-11)	KS 3 (Y7-9, age 11-14)	KS 4 (Y10-11, age 14-16)	KS 5 (Y12-13, age 16-18)	Above KS5 (age 18-25)	Any com

Question 3

What factors do you feel are *enabling* in securing children / young people's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?

Please type your response into the box below.

Question 4

And what factors do you feel *are restrictive* in securing children / young people's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?

Please type your response into the box below.

Question 5

To what extent do you feel that statutory assessment processes and procedures *enable you* to take a person-centred approach?

Please type your response into the box below.

Question 6

How would things *be different* to enable children / young people to express their views more fully and be more fully involved in the statutory process?

Please type your response into the box below.

Hester Howells

Trainee Educational Psychologist, Doctorate in Educational Psychology
30th May, 2020

Faculty of Education
School of Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ
United Kingdom

Title of study: Educational Psychologists' perceptions of enabling and restricting factors affecting children's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes**?**

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT – *Educational Psychologists*

(13) What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study about **EPs views on how they involve children/young people in statutory assessments and the tools they use to facilitate involvement.**

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are an EP with EPSS. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling me that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your information as described.
- ✓ You have received a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(14) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researcher:

Hester Howells, Trainee Educational Psychologist, EdPsyD Student at UEA.

Supervisor – Dr Andrea Honess, research tutor & co-course director

(15) What will the study involve for me?

Part 1

This involves you completing a **survey questionnaire**, which has 6 questions. This will be sent to your work email address and you'll reply by email to the researcher. You will be asked to provide typed descriptive answers to these 6 questions, in your own words. This should take between 15 and 30 minutes to complete.

Your name will **not** be recorded, **nor** will any personal data about you be recorded. You will be given a participant number so that what you write will be anonymous. The information you give in the survey questionnaire will be analysed.

Part 2

At the end of the survey questionnaire, there is an opt-in box that you may tick if you wish to. This ask if you wish to be a participant in a **remotely-completed individual interview,** with the researcher, which will give you an opportunity to voice any views you may have in more detail. This will last up to 30 minutes.

The interview will be completed remotely, using your laptop / work mobile phone (Teams or WhatsApp), on a mutually convenient date and time that is agreed in advance.

During the interview, the researcher will review your responses to the survey questionnaire and give you space and time to add any other views you may have.

Your name will **not** be recorded, **nor** will any personal data about you be recorded. You will be given a participant number so that what you say will be anonymous. The information generated in the interview will be audio recorded, then transcribed and analysed.

(16) How much of my time will the study take?

The study will take up between approximately 15 minutes to one hour of your time.

(17) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia. You won't be able to withdraw after the data has been transcribed/ analysed.

(18) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

The researcher will treat you respectfully at all times, and ensure that you have plenty of opportunity to voice your opinions during the interview.

Talking about feelings on involving children/young people might bring up a range of emotions on the statutory process and how it is currently. The researcher will be attentive to you and your well -being at all times, and will be available at the end of the interview for individual discussion.

(19) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

It is anticipated that you may perceive a benefit in that your views on including children/young people's views in the statutory process are being heard. You will hopefully feel listened to and may relish the opportunity to provide feedback on existing procedures. You will be given opportunity to make suggestions as to how you feel the procedures might be improved. This process could empower you to feel that you can influence how future procedures might be developed.

The study might benefit the SLT and wider NCC by providing valuable feedback on how EPs feel children/young people might be more meaningfully involved in the statutory assessment process.

(20) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

The information that will be collected from you and used in the study is strictly limited.

For EPs completing the **survey questionnaire** only (part 1), information collected from you and used in the study will consist of what you type in the response boxes.

For EPs completing the **survey questionnaire** (part 1) and **the interview** (part 2), information collected from you and used in the study will consist of what you type in the response boxes and what you say in the interview.

For parts 1 and 2, no personal or identifying information is taken. You will be given a number to preserve your anonymity.

For part 2, the interview will be recorded (audio) and the recording will only be used for transcription. Transcripts (anonymous) may be seen by the UEA course team, internal or external moderators.

The study results will be written in a 25,000 word Doctoral Thesis and submitted to the UEA as part of the researcher's Doctorate in Educational Psychology.

A short feedback report will be made available to all EPs and EPSS SLT in the service, by 30th August 2021. This report may be published in the NCC research bulletin. The researcher will present a brief overview of the results of the study at the Service's annual CPD day in September, 2021.

Information from the study will be stored securely for the duration of the study in line with UEA policies and after the study, information will be securely kept by the UEA.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to the researcher collecting survey questionnaire (part 1) and interview (part 2) information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2015).

Your information will be stored securely, and your information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law.

(21) What if I would like further information about the study?
When you have read this information, Hester will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Hester via email *h.howells@uea.ac.uk*

(22) Will I be told the results of the study?
Yes. You will receive a short feedback report. You have the right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can access feedback by reading the report that will be emailed to you. You can access this feedback after 30.8.2021.

(23) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?
The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem, please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:

Hester Howells

School of Education and Lifelong Learning

University of East Anglia

NORWICH NR4 7TJ

h.howells@uea.ac.uk

If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor:

a.honess@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Professor Nalini Boodhoo at N.Boodhoo@uea.ac.uk.

(24) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?

You need to fill in one copy of the consent form, below and email it to *h.howells@uea.ac.uk* Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so.
✓ The researcher has answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.
✓ I understand I can withdraw from the study at any time prior to the survey questionnaire information being analysed (part 1) or the recording of the interview (part 2) being analysed.
✓ I understand that information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Completing a survey questionnaire** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Completing an interview** YES ☐ NO ☐

- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?** YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your email address:

☐ Email: _____

.....

Signature

....

PRINT name

.....

Date

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (1st Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so.
✓ The researcher has answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia now or in the future.
✓ I understand I can withdraw from the study at any time prior to the survey questionnaire information being analysed (part 1) or the recording of the interview (part 2) being analysed.
✓ I understand that information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Completing a survey questionnaire** YES ☐ NO ☐
- **Completing an interview** YES ☐ NO ☐

- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?**
  YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your email address:

☐ Email: _____

.....

Signature

....

PRINT name

.....

Date

APPENDIX F

EP SURVEY

Hester Howells

Trainee Educational Psychologist, Doctorate in Educational Psychology
30th May, 2020

Faculty of Education
School of Lifelong Learning
University of East Anglia
Norwich Research Park
Norwich NR4 7TJ

EP Survey Questionnaire

Guidance on responding to the below questions:

Thinking about your direct, face-to-face statutory work with children / young people (*before* COVID-19), the following questions explore how EPs gather views and involve children /young people in statutory assessments.

Please give as much information as you feel able.

Question 1

How do you *typically involve* children/young people in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?

Please use the table below to describe how you involve children / young people at various Key Stage (KS) children/young people.

KS 0 (EYFS, age 3-5)	KS 1 (Y1-2, age 5-7)	KS 2 (Y3-6, age 7-11)	KS 3 (Y7-9, age 11-14)	KS 4 (Y10-11, age 14-16)	KS 5 (Y12-13, age 16-18)	Above KS5 (age 18-25)	Any other comments?

Question 2

Which approaches / tools / techniques / strategies do you often use when gathering children/young people's views?

Examples: (*not an exhaustive or prescriptive list*): talking mats, blob tree, conversation (informal/structured), observation, cue cards, scaling tools, solution-focussed questions, Personal Construct approaches, puppets, play-based, subject picture cards, externalisation cards, one-page profiles, 'unfinished sentences about school', narrative approaches, art-based approaches, checklists child/young person completes.

Please use the table below to describe how you work with various Key Stage (KS) children/young people.

KS 0 (EYFS, age 3-5)	KS 1 (Y1-2, age 5-7)	KS 2 (Y3-6, age 7-11)	KS 3 (Y7-9, age 11-14)	KS 4 (Y10-11, age 14-16)	KS 5 (Y12-13, age 16-18)	Above KS5 (age 18-25)	Any other comments?

Question 3

What factors do you feel are *enabling* in securing children / young people's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?

Please type your response into the box below.

Question 4

And what factors do you feel *are restrictive* in securing children / young people's involvement in statutory assessment processes and outcomes?

Please type your response into the box below.

Question 5

To what extent do you feel that statutory assessment processes and procedures *enable you* to take a person-centred approach?

Please type your response into the box below.

Definition of ‘person-centred’ 2014 SEND Code of Practice,

- focus on the child / young person as an individual;
- enable children / young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- enable children / young people to be part of the decision-making process;
- be easy for children / young people to understand,
- enable the child / young person, and those that know them best, to say what they have done, what they are interested in and what outcomes they are seeking in the future
- tailor support to the needs of the individual; organise assessments to minimise demands on families.

Question 6

How would things *be different* to enable children / young people to express their views more fully?

Please type your response into the box below.

The researcher would like to offer you the opportunity to participate in an online interview, to talk in more detail about your responses. This will take up to 30 minutes and be arranged for a mutually convenient date and time. It can be conducted via phone, the Teams App on your laptop, or WhatsApp on your work mobile phone.

If you are happy to participate in this, please mark the box below and provide a contact email.

I would like to participate in a brief interview (completed remotely) to speak in more detail about my responses.	My contact email to arrange a mutually convenient date & time for this:
	Email: