Using solution-focused pupil support meetings (SFPSMs) to support pupils identified as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD): Early intervention at the Year 6/7 transition phase.

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology within the Faculty of Humanities

2013

Nadia Tabassum

School of Education
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ABSTRACT

The University of Manchester

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Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology (D. Ed. Ch. Psychol.)

2013

Using solution-focused pupil support meetings (SFPSMs) to support pupils identified as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD): Early intervention at the Year 6/7 transition phase.

Background: Historically, person-centred planning (PCP) reviews were (and still are) used within the health and social care field (Department of Health, 2009). However, more recently this is an approach that has been used within education, and more recently, for individuals identified as having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) (Taylor-Brown, 2012). The current research drew upon PCP, solution-focused approaches (Alexander & Sked, 2010) and visual reviews (Hayes, 2004) to develop solution-focused pupil support meetings (SFPSMs). The aim was to look at the ‘process’ and evaluation of the SFPSMs from the perspective of the child and young person (CYP), school staff, professionals and the Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist (SSEP) to ascertain the facilitators and barriers to the approach in order to improve and develop the approach further.

Participants: 3 pupils (Year 6) and their key worker (KW) in school, key [other] professional and the co-ordinating SSEP, which gave a total of 9 participants.

Methods: A case study design was employed using semi-structured interviews with pupils at 3 phases (pre, post and follow up) and with school staff, professionals and the SSEP at the follow up stage.

Analysis/ Findings: Qualitative data were thematically analysed. The 3 case studies present some initial positive findings for the use of SFPSMs and identify areas for further development of the approach.

Conclusion/implications: Findings are discussed in relation to implications for the Educational Psychology Service, school practice and the Local Authority.
DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

Firstly I want to dedicate this work and this thesis to my father, who has always valued education and instilled within us the same value. I know that he is smiling down on us all and he would be so proud to know that his little girl has become a ‘Doctor’.

Secondly, I want to dedicate this work to my mother, who can only be described as the ‘best mum’ anyone can have.

Finally, I want to dedicate this work to my whole family, especially after the very difficult time we have all been through as a family in 2013. It has been hard but we have all got through it ‘together’ and been there for each other, which will always remain.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to say thank you to all the young people and professionals who kindly agreed to take part in this research and gave up their valuable time. It is much appreciated, so thank you.

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Finally, I would like to say a huge thanks to the One Above, who has given me the strength to get through these very difficult years of completing a Doctorate, as well as ‘trying’ to balance my family life. I am eternally grateful and there are no words that I can use to express my gratitude.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Rationale

The impetus for the current research came from the Local Authority (LA) where the researcher was based as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). One of the requirements of the placement was to look into ‘exclusions’ as a potential research project and for the researcher to have an interest in the area of Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). As the researcher had an interest in SEBD and background experience within this area, the suggestion of carrying out research within this area was appealing. The lead Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist (SSEP) for SEBD had been commissioned by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to look into exclusions, with an aim to support the reduction of exclusions within the authority. As the SSEP had prior experience and training in the use of Person-Centred Planning (PCP) meetings, it was felt that this would be a useful starting point to use, with a focus on the process of these meetings from the perspectives of the individuals involved in order to support the development of the approach further and more broadly within the LA.

Over the years there has been a growing emphasis upon looking at exclusions and enabling children with SEBD to become more included within the school setting (Department for Education [DfE], 2011a, Lloyd Bennett, 2006) at a national and local level. The context within which this pilot project took place was based upon the LA’s Children and Young People’s Plan (2011-2014) (Anon LA, 2011), which emphasised looking at the reduction of exclusions. The emphasis has been upon early intervention in schools and collaborating with others to prevent exclusion (DfE, 2011b). The focus on exclusion came about due to the increase in exclusions in the LA where the research was carried out. This research was a pilot project (carried out with two local secondary schools) using a multi-agency meeting based on child-centred (Hayes, 2004; Sanderson, 2000) and solution-focused principles (Alexander & Sked, 2010). Meetings were held with pupils identified as being ‘at risk’ or vulnerable to exclusion by their schools, which led to the development of the Solution-Focused Pupil Support Meeting (SFPSM). In order to emphasise the early intervention element pupils were identified during the Year 6/7 transition phase with an aim to begin the SFPSMs in the summer term before they began secondary school. The SFPSMs also included all the professionals involved with the pupils. The aim was to use the SFPSMs for the pilot project, refine the SFPSMs based on
the outcomes from the research and eventually use them across the borough in other participating secondary schools as a technique for early intervention to prevent exclusions for pupils identified as having SEBD, and as being ‘at risk’ or vulnerable to exclusion.

1.2. Outline of the present study

The present study consists of five further chapters and a brief overview of each chapter is provided in the sections below.

1.2.1. Chapter 2- Literature Review.

This chapter focuses on the relevant literature for the current piece of research, beginning with the literature search strategy. The chapter discusses the following areas of relevance and interest to the research:

- SEBD;
- Exclusions, including ‘additional risk factors for exclusion’;
- Transition;
- The Role of the Educational Psychologist (EP), including multi-agency working;
- Pupil voice in relation to exclusion;
- Frameworks considered for the SFPSMs.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ‘closest hits' and the ‘gap' that has been identified through the literature search and the ‘gap' that the research is aiming to address.

Although various studies have been carried out looking at exclusions (Charlton, Panting & Willis, 2004; Daniels et al., 2003) and the voice of pupils who may be at risk of exclusions (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006; Hawkins, 2011) fewer studies have looked at the views of pupils at the transition from Year 6/7 (Evangelou et al., 2008) and even fewer in the use of the PCP approach with children identified with SEBD (Taylor-Brown, 2012). Therefore, the current study aimed to address this ‘gap' through looking at the views of pupils identified with SEBD and as ‘at risk’ or vulnerable to exclusion using a SFPSM (an adapted version of the PCP approach which incorporated the use of Solution-Focused principles) at the Year 6/7 transition phase.
1.2.2. Chapter 3- Methodology.

This chapter outlines the inherent theoretical underpinnings to the research, identifies the design, the methodology used, the data analysis approach used, concluding with a critique of the research design and methodology.

A social constructivist ontological and epistemological position was taken for this research, which led to the development of a case study design and semi-structured interviews as a method of data gathering. The aim was to develop three case studies (each case included the pupil and the adults supporting them i.e. a pupil, parent, school professional and a key worker) within the two local secondary schools who had volunteered to take part in the research. In each case the pupil was the focus and individuals supporting the pupil were invited to take part. The interviews were planned to involve pupils, their key workers, professionals in school, parents and, the SSEP. The pupils were interviewed at three points: pre-meeting; post-meeting and; follow-up meeting. Key workers, professionals in school and the SSEP were interviewed at the follow-up stage.

The overall aim of the research was to look at the views of the pupils (and adults supporting them) experiencing the SFPSM in order to identify the facilitators and barriers to enhance the development of the SFPSM in the future. Therefore the following research questions were asked:

RQ1: How is the SFPSM intervention process perceived by all participants involved?

RQ2: How do participants perceive SFPSMs could work successfully in the future?

RQ3: How does the Educational Psychologist perceive her role in developing the SFPSMs approach?

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data in order to uncover themes from the data collected from all the three case studies and the SSEP perspective.

1.2.3. Chapter 4- Findings.

The findings from the research are presented as individual case studies, and themes are highlighted as they have emerged through the data analysis. The themes are then discussed as a collective set of themes from across the entire data set of all the case studies and are presented as ‘Key’ and ‘Sub’ themes. These findings are used as the basis for the final discussion of themes from the study;
linking back themes to the wider literature and identification of implications for future research and practice.

1.2.4. Chapter 5- Discussion.

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the research questions posed and concludes with a summary of implications for the LA, EP practice and future directions.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The overall focus of this chapter is to review and discuss the areas of literature that are relevant to the current research project and will begin with a description of databases searched and search terms used. This will subsequently be followed by a description of each area of focus in the literature (outlined below) resulting in the presentation of studies and research in each area identified. The chapter will conclude with the identification of the studies that are the ‘closest hits’ and the ‘gap’ in the literature that the current research is aiming to address.

The aim of the literature review was to identify studies conducted in the areas of research interest, between 1990 and up to 2013, particularly those that had an element of focusing on qualitative data collection and social constructivism, as these two areas are directly linked to the design and epistemological position of the current research. In addition to this, the literature search also focused on looking at interventions that have been used with individuals described as having SEBD. The literature review section will focus on the following areas:

- SEBD;
- Exclusions, including ‘additional risk factors for exclusion’;
- Transition;
- The Role of the Educational Psychologist, including multi-agency working;
- Pupil voice in relation to exclusion;
- Frameworks considered for the SFPSMs;
- Summary of the literature and the research questions.

2.2 Literature Search

In order to identify research within the area of exclusions, multi-agency work, pupil voice, pupil/child-centred planning, transition and SEBD the following databases and resources were used:

- Education Resources Information Center (ERIC);
- Google Scholar;
- Web of Knowledge/Science;
As there was such a broad range of areas that needed to be looked at for the literature review some of the search terms resulted in providing broad overviews of areas of interest (i.e. SEBD, exclusion) and these subsequently had to be refined as the literature search proceeded.

The initial search terms used were ‘exclusion’ and ‘multi-agency’ and these yielded 2,681 results. This was refined by using the terms ‘exclusion’, ‘multi-agency work’ and ‘inter-agency working’ and those articles that were peer-reviewed. In addition to this the terms ‘young people’, ‘education’, ‘school exclusion’ and ‘risk factors’ were included in the search terms for each of the above database. In order to locate articles on transition the following search terms were used: ‘transition’; ‘primary school’ and; ‘secondary school’. The search terms used for pupil voice and pupil/child-centred planning were: ‘pupil voice’; ‘child-centred planning’; ‘pupil-centred planning’; ‘pupil-centred reviews’; ‘pupil participation’. The initial search terms for SEBD were: ‘social, emotional and, behavioural’. In addition to this, some of the references were ‘harvested’ from articles found on the above databases for each of the areas outlined above.

As the reader begins to read the literature review it is important to bear in mind that some aspects of the literature review are providing a broad overview of the areas of interest (i.e. SEBD, exclusions), whereas others aspects provide more detailed information on areas that have been reviewed and are particularly pertinent to the current research i.e. the use of person-centred planning for children identified as presenting with SEBD. In fact, when the search terms ‘person-centred transition review meetings’ and ‘SEBD’ were included in the search engine, this yielded one journal on the BPS website, which was research by Taylor-Brown (2012), and the ‘closest hit’ for the current piece of research.

2.3. Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)

As the context within which this research is set is looking at pupils who have been identified as being vulnerable or being ‘at risk’ of exclusion it is inevitable that those individuals identified for the research will display some form of SEBD, including possible underlying learning difficulties. Therefore, as a starting point it is important
to discuss the area of SEBD and the implication it has within the context of the current research project.

When looking through research papers and government guidance the terms used to describe children and young people (CYP) experiencing behavioural difficulties is often inconsistent (Taylor-Brown, 2012). However, Lloyd Bennett (2006) provides an interesting discussion in his paper around the terms that have been used to describe behavioural difficulties over the years (emotional and behavioural difficulties, antisocial, delinquent, maladjusted, deviant, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, aggressive, affective disorders, personality disorder and psychopathology) and now the umbrella term for such difficulties can be seen as social, emotional and, behavioural difficulties (Daniels et al., 2003). The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (SEN, CoP, [DfES], 2001) defines EBD/behaviour as: being hyperactive and lacking concentration; presenting challenging behaviour; being disruptive and disturbing; being withdrawn or isolated; having immature social skills and presenting challenging behaviours that may arise from other complex needs (p. 87, para. 7:60). The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (1999) describes EBD ranging from “social maladaption to abnormal emotional stresses. They are persistent (if not necessarily permanent) and constitute learning difficulties” (p.7). For the purpose of this thesis the term social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) will be used to highlight the importance of social factors (Hayden, 1997).

As can been seen from the range of definitions given above in relation to SEBD, there appears to be some contention and lack of clarity around a ‘set’ definition or ‘clear’ terminology to describe individuals who may display SEBD. The term is largely seen as a social construction of labels (Taylor-Brown, 2012) and can be a subjective term which is socially constructed to mean a range of things (Bhaskar, 1975; Sayer, 2000). Therefore, although the term SEBD will be used in this thesis it brings with it a note of caution due to the many criticisms levelled against the use of terms used to describe individuals with SEBD, as there is an over-lap with other labels and it is an ‘ill-defined’ term (Taylor-Brown, 2011). This lack of clarity around the description of SEBD also has implications for the current research project, as it means that those individuals who have been identified to take part in the research and as having SEBD, will be identified and selected based on the subjective opinions of those professionals (i.e. teachers, the SSEP, Head teachers, SENCo’s) who were part of the research and were asked to identify individuals they felt displayed SEBD and who would benefit from being part of a SFPSM.
The concern around the behaviour of children, particularly in the classroom setting, can be dated as far back as the Elton Report into Discipline in Schools (Department for Education and Science [DES], 1989). This report found that teachers were most concerned about the cumulative effects that persistent disruption had within the classroom setting. The concern around children’s behaviour in schools is one expressed by educators and the public alike (Hart, 2010).

The current government policy, in England, for pupils with SEBD is one of inclusion within the mainstream school environment (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2003a, 2004; Department for Children, Schools and Families [DCSF], 2007). The role of LAs in the education of pupils with EBD was clarified by the 1996 Education Act, whereby a duty was placed on the LA to publish behaviour support plans that reflect comprehensive and well understood local arrangements for pupils with EBD.

A number of policy changes have been made which increase opportunities for pupils with SEN, such as SEBD, to ensure that they receive their education within a mainstream setting (SEN and Disability Act, HMSO, 2001; SEN CoP [DfES], 2001; SEN strategy [DfES], 2004). In terms of inclusion there is evidence that the United Kingdom has been successful in integrating pupils with SEN (Visser & Stokes, 2003). However, despite the emphasis on inclusion, pupils who display problematic behaviour that may negatively impact on a school’s performance are not universally welcome (Stirling, 1992; Cohen, Hughes, Ashworth & Blair, 1994; Daniels, Visser, Cole & de Reybekill, 1999).

The social inclusion agenda, which is embodied in the Every Child Matters (ECM) policy (DfES, 2003a), has been accompanied by initiatives such as Excellence in Schools (DfEE, 1997) and the Extended Schools (DfES, 2005a) to try to overcome issues around social exclusion and inclusion for CYP. In addition to this, the government issued guidance on how to develop the social and emotional skills of pupils which were hoped would impact positively on pupils and their behaviour (DfES, 2005a). The Behaviour and Attendance strands within the National Strategies have been designed to address a range of issues around capacity building for diversity and inclusion, raise standards, and bring improvements in behaviour and attendance and address media-led concerns about standards of behaviour (DfES, 2003b, 2003c).

Studies have invariably shown that there are inconsistencies in the experiences of pupils with SEBD in terms of inclusion within the mainstream setting (Burton,
Bartlett & Cuevas, 2009; Goodman & Burton, 2010). Early studies have also shown that some of the factors that correlated with ‘suspension’ from school are emotional difficulties and learning difficulties (Galloway, 1982), particularly language difficulties (Botting & Conti-Ramsden, 2000; Clegg, Stackhouse, Finch, Murphy & Nicholls, 2009; Lindsay & Dockrell, 2000; Lindsay, Dockrell & Strand, 2007); literacy difficulties (Carroll, Maughan, Goodman & Meltzer, 2005; Snowling, Adams, Bowyer-Crane & Tobin, 2000); literacy difficulties (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008); communication difficulties (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008); cognitive impairment (Fisher & Blair, 1998).

However, despite there being a range of government initiatives in place to help improve the social, emotional and behavioural skills of pupils, the inconsistencies in how to respond to pupils displaying problematic behaviour appear to be a continued feature in education policy (Burton et al., 2009). Although the government can be given credit for placing pupils with SEBD on the national agenda (Greenhalgh, 1999; Ellis & Todd, 2005) the area of educational provision for young people displaying social and emotional difficulties is still under-researched (Cole & Daniels, 2002). This is also affected by the pressure on schools to raise standards and the contradiction between inclusive practice and raising standards continues to be felt by educators (Burton et al., 2009). The constraints of the National Curriculum are seen as unhelpful in meeting the needs of pupils with SEBD (Lloyd Bennett, 2006; Morris, 1996).

Inevitably, one of the consequences for individuals displaying SEBD is ultimately being excluded from the school environment, which can result in subsequent social exclusion too. Therefore, many researchers have looked at aiming to prevent exclusion of children, particularly at the secondary school phase using a range of interventions (Burton, 2006). The current piece of research is aiming to shed some light around a specific intervention or approach (SFPSM) and whether or not it can be successfully applied to support pupils with SEBD and to prevent exclusion for those pupils who may be ‘at risk’ of exclusion at the early stage of Year 6/7 transition. The next sub-section discusses exclusions and the relevance that they have to the current piece of research.

### 2.4. Exclusions

As an element of the research was to look at early intervention to prevent exclusion for those individuals identified as vulnerable or ‘at risk’ of exclusion it was seen as necessary to explore exclusions in relation to their definition, national and local
government guidance around this area and, some of the history and trends in the exclusion literature. These areas are discussed in detail below.

2.4.1. A description of exclusions.

Exclusion is essentially when a head teacher either suspends a pupil from school for a number of days (fixed-term) or a pupil is expelled from the school permanently (Vulliamy & Webb, 2003). The DfE (2011b) Statistical First Release (SFR) describes a fixed period exclusion as a pupil being excluded from a school but their name is still on the school register. Permanent exclusion is when a pupil is excluded from school and their name is removed from the school register (DfE, 2011b). In the case of a permanent exclusion the pupil may experience any of the following forms of educational provision: Pupil Referral Unit (PRU); special school; home tuition; attendance at further education colleges for vocational training and a range of alternative provisions (Daniels & Cole, 2010; Hayden, 2003). A further type of exclusion identified by Munn, Lloyd and Cullen (2000) is an ‘informal’ exclusion, whereby a pupil is sent home by the school but no records of this are kept. These informal or ‘unofficial’ exclusions (Osler, Watling & Busher, 2001) occur when a pupil is sent home, with parental agreement, in order to defuse a confrontational situation but the extent of this practice was unclear from the study conducted by Osler et al. (2001). In addition, attendance and truancy figures may not reveal any ‘internal’ exclusions that occur i.e. spending time outside the head teacher’s office (Munn et al., 2000). The most common form of exclusion is fixed term exclusion, whereby pupils are excluded for a certain number of days before returning (Hawkins, 2011).

2.4.2. National and Local government guidance on exclusion.

Government guidance (DfEE, 1999) laid out clear guidelines that schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were expected to adhere to in relation to exclusions. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) (1998) was set up in order to tackle exclusion and to encourage inclusion within the school environment, as exclusion from school was an associated factor that led to longer term social exclusion and juvenile crime (Osler et al., 2001; Berridge, Brodie, Pitts, Porteous & Tarling, 2001; SEU, 2004), therefore exacerbating the longer term negative impact upon individuals.

In terms of the LA where this research took place the LA’s Children and Young People’s Plan (2011-2014) (Anon LA, 2011) is committed to reducing the exclusion rates within the LA, as the authority has one of the highest exclusion rates in the
Therefore, it was seen as essential to try and tackle this issue and consider possible approaches that could be used in order to do this.

2.4.3. History and trends in exclusion.

During the 1990’s due to a sharp rise in permanent exclusions in the UK, particularly in secondary schools (Parsons, 1996; Harris, Eden & Blair, 2000; Blyth & Milner, 1996), exclusions became an area of focus for school improvement for the Labour government at that time (Munn et al., 2000). This rise in permanent exclusions can be seen to be caused by a “complex range of social and educational factors interacting together” (Hallam & Castle, 2001, p. 169). However, despite official school exclusion figures declining around 1999, figures for 2000/2001 showed an increase in school exclusions (Daniels & Cole, 2010).

Government policy has also influenced the exclusion rates and fluctuations can be seen over the years. Information on exclusions is derived from the School Census (SC) returns and since January 2006 the SC collection has moved to a termly collection for secondary schools (DfE, 2011b). Data is collected two terms in arrears and the number of exclusions has been under reported in the SC from some schools (DfE, 2011b). However, the most recent government statistics have shown that the overall rate of permanent and fixed term exclusions in primary, secondary and special schools has decreased (DfE, 2011b). It is important to take account of the fact that these figures do not reflect the degree to which unofficial exclusions are taking place (DfE, 2011b; Daniels & Cole, 2010). As the focus of this research is specifically looking at secondary schools, Table 2.1 and Table 2.2 below illustrate permanent and fixed term exclusion rates over the years.

Table 2.1

Statistics showing the number of permanent exclusions in secondary schools from 2000-2010 (DfE, 2011b).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of permanent</td>
<td>7,330</td>
<td>7,790</td>
<td>7,740</td>
<td>8,430</td>
<td>8,200</td>
<td>8,150</td>
<td>7,520</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>5,700</td>
<td>5,020</td>
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### Table 2.2

Statistics showing the number of fixed-term exclusions from 2005-2010 (DfE, 2011b).

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of fixed period exclusions</td>
<td>348,380</td>
<td>363,27</td>
<td>324,180</td>
<td>307,840</td>
<td>279,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of fixed period exclusions***</td>
<td>..</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of school population****</td>
<td>10.46</td>
<td>10.94</td>
<td>9.86</td>
<td>9.41</td>
<td>8.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The number of permanent exclusions expressed as a percentage of the total number.

**The number of permanent exclusions expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of all pupils (excluding dually registered pupils) in January each year.
The number of fixed period exclusions expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of all pupils (excluding dually registered pupils) in January each year.

Some of the trends from the Statistical First Release (DfE, 2011b), which are of particular relevance to this piece of research, can be seen below:

- Boys are approximately *four times* more likely to be permanently excluded and *three times* more likely to have a fixed period exclusion compared to girls;
- Boys are more likely to be excluded at a younger age compared to girls;
- Pupils with a statement of SEN are *eight times* more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than those pupils without SEN;
- Children who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) are *four times* more likely to receive a permanent exclusion and *three times* more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion compared to those who are not receiving FSM.

However, Pavey and Visser (2003) caution against the reliability of exclusion data and Webb and Vulliamy (2001) also question the reliability for reasons given for exclusions in exclusion statistics and the unreliability of school exclusion rates. Similarly, in their research, Daniels and Cole (2010) found that information and records provided from the LEA with regard to exclusions lacked consistency.

### 2.4.4. Reasons for exclusion.

SEBD such as aggressive and disruptive behaviour, have been identified as the most common reasons leading to school exclusion (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007). The aim of the research by Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot (2007) was to evaluate a multidisciplinary intervention which aimed to address school exclusion at the primary school level and the impact it had on children who had been identified as having disruptive/aggressive behaviour, their parents/carers and their teachers. Their sample included looking at 124 cases of children aged between 4-12 years who had been excluded from primary school and their involvement in the study lasted 19 months.

The most common reasons given for exclusions (permanent and fixed term) were persistent disruptive behaviour (29%) and physical assault against a pupil (17.1%) (DfE, 2011). This also reflects findings from the study undertaken by Daniels et al. (2003), whereby the most common reason given for exclusions by the ten LEAs in the study, was assault against a pupil (actual or threatened) (24.3%). Interestingly,
when pupils themselves were asked about the reasons for their exclusion the responses were as follows: physical violence; damaging property; assaulting staff; throwing knives; drug dealing (Munn & Lloyd, 2005). Osler et al. (2001) found the following reasons and triggers for exclusion, particularly those related to underlying social factors:

- Secondary schools not being able to cope with children from different social backgrounds;
- The Year 6/7 transition causing some pupils problems;
- Children living in complex and difficult family backgrounds, crises and social circumstances;
- Truancy;
- Being traveller children.

Further government statistics also show the link between pupil misbehaviour and subsequent exclusion (DCSF, 2009a). Permanent exclusion usually occurred after a long history of challenging behaviour (Daniels et al., 2003). In the study carried out by Daniels et al. (2003) looking at CYP who had been permanently excluded from school, they found that half of the sample (193 CYP aged between 13 to 16 years old) in their study had identified SEN, most commonly, emotional and behavioural difficulties combined with some learning difficulties. In addition to this, many of the CYP had identified severe social difficulties beyond the school context. Some of the positive findings from the research were that 50% of CYP who were engaged in education, training or employment up to 23-24 months after their exclusion were supported by the following factors: the CYP had belief in themselves; they had on-going support from a ‘link-worker’ or another member of staff from the LA; had supportive family members; felt that their exclusion had been unjust.

The majority of the research mentioned above has tended to focus upon qualitative methods of data collection using semi-structured interviews, questionnaires or surveys, which brings into question the objectivity and reliability of the research carried out. Some studies have used a method of triangulation whereby they used interviews, observations, questionnaires and field notes (Vulliamy & Webb, 2001; Webb & Vulliamy, 2004; Daniels et al., 2003) which enhanced the validity of the research carried out as it meant that they did not just rely on one method of data collection.
In conclusion, it appears that the main reasons for exclusion are essentially related to externalising behaviour and the triggers and reasons identified through the research carried out by Osler et al. (2001) are of particular relevance to the sample of participants included in the current research project, particularly the Year 6/7 transition phase and the complex and difficult home lives that the participants lived with. Therefore, the next sub-section will highlight additional risk factors for exclusion that have been identified through the literature review.

2.4.5. Additional risk factors for exclusion.

Although the previous section discusses the risk factors for exclusion this section is seeking to explore some further risk factors that may be inherent or part of an individual’s life that puts them at further risk of exclusion and takes a holistic picture of their needs and circumstances. There are a number of potential risk factors that make some children and young people more prone and vulnerable to exclusion. Although the literature in the area of exclusion also focuses upon social exclusion (Bynner, 2001; Youth Justice Board, [YJB], 2005) for the purposes of this thesis the risk factors for school exclusion will be looked at specifically. However, it must be noted that there appears to be a link between exclusion from school and subsequent social exclusion (Bynner, 2001; Christle, Jolivette & Nelson, 2005) and being permanently excluded increases the risk of other negative outcomes such as poor educational attainment, involvement in crime, poor mental and physical health and unemployment (Audit Commission, 1996; Social Exclusion Unit, 1998). Some of the potential risk factors specifically in relation to exclusion can be largely grouped into the following categories: individual, family, school, community, peer and economic (Bynner, 2001; Christle et al., 2005; YJB, 2005). Figure 2.1 below illustrates some of the risk factors for exclusion that have been identified through the literature.
Figure 2.1. Illustration of risk factors for exclusion.

Considering the risk factors identified through the literature for exclusion the ones that appear to be most relevant for the participants in the current study (particularly the pupils and their families) are: Gender (being male); SEBD; English as an Additional Language (EAL); aggressive behaviour; single parent families; parental drug or alcohol misuse; peer relationships; low school achievement; learning difficulties; exclusion before permanent exclusion; transition; free school meals; parental occupation; low socio-economic status; deprivation. However, if the
current project is rolled out further it may be possible to apply the approach with other pupils who have experienced different risk factors.

Blyth and Milner (1994, 1996) argue that school exclusions can be seen as a form of social segregation which will inevitably lead to deviance and there is a suggestion in the literature that school exclusion leads to subsequent social exclusion and crime (Christle et al., 2005; Webb & Vulliamy, 2004; Bagley & Pritchard, 1998). Many studies have found a correlation between exclusion from school and offending (Graham & Bowling, 1995; Cullingford & Morrison, 1996) and many studies have looked into the factors that may put young people at risk for delinquency (Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Dodge, 1999). The study conducted by the YJB (2005) has found fourteen risk factors prevalent for involvement in youth crime and the ones that are the most closely linked to school exclusion are: Aggressive behaviour (including bullying) 25.3%; Low achievement beginning in primary school (23.6%); Family history of problem behaviour (22.2%); Lack of commitment to school (including truancy) (20.8%); School disorganisation (17.2%).

2.5. Transition

As the focus of the project was to look at ‘early intervention’ it was felt, by the multi-agency ‘steering group’, that the best place to begin work would be during the Year 6/7 transition to secondary school, so that plans were in place for a pupil before they began secondary school. So, in the summer term of Year 6 the pupil would have their initial multi-agency meeting based on solution-focused and child-centred principles (SFPSM). Therefore, the next part of the literature review will focus on transition and the importance and impact this period has on CYP.

Galton, Gray and Ruddock (1999) differentiate and discuss two types of change that pupils go through: ‘transfer’ (moving from one class to another within the same institution) and ‘transition’ (moving from one institution to another). For the purpose of this thesis the term ‘transition’ will be used to mean the move from primary school to secondary school.

The transition from primary to secondary school is an area that has been given increased attention over the years (Zeedyk et al., 2003; Shepherd & Roker, 2005) and has been recognised as an important change in the lives of most young people (Galton et al., 1999; West, Sweeting & Young, 2010) and, in UK educational policy, the aim and focus has been upon ensuring that this is a smooth transition for all young people (Morris & Pullen, 2006; HMIe, 2006). Despite this, the transition from
primary school to secondary school has been described as ‘difficult’ (Zeedyk et al., 2003) and as a ‘key rite of passage’ (Pratt & George, 2005, p. 16). It is described as difficult because of the change in the physical environment from a primary to a secondary school and also the added educational demands and peer pressure pupils may face (West et al., 2010).

Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm and Splittgerber (2000) describe transition as developmental (physical, intellectual, emotional) and systemic (school systems) and claim that the two are often closely related, whereas in a similar vein, West et al. (2010) describe anxieties and stress that pupils feel before the transition to secondary school as around the ‘formal’ school system (school size) and the ‘informal’ system of peer relationships (Measor & Woods, 1984; Anderson et al., 2000; Graham & Hill, 2003; Chedzoy & Burden, 2005; Shepherd & Roker, 2005). Therefore, the transition involves a change in both the physical setting and the social roles that pupils may experience and they will need to use some adaptive strategies to support the discontinuities between the two (Cotterell, 1986; Rice, 1997). However, research evidence suggests that these anxieties that individuals may have tend to decrease or disappear within the first term and within the first year of secondary school (Galton & Morrison, 2000; McGee, Ward, Gibbons & Harlow, 2003; Boyd, 2005; Graham & Hill, 2003). Some research has shown that although pupils have anxieties about the transition to secondary school there is also a sense of positive anticipation about the move (Anderson et al., 2000; Lucey & Reay, 2000; Stradling & MacNeil, 2000; Zeedyk et al., 2003; Delamont & Galton, 1986). Some of the common fears that pupils had about going to secondary school are identified through the research as: getting lost; getting more homework; being bullied (Chedzoy & Burden, 2005; Zeedyk et al., 2003); being the smallest in the school; strict teachers and detentions (Chedzoy & Burden, 2005); peer relationships (Zeedyk et al., 2003).

The transition to secondary school may also impact upon a child’s academic performance (Zeedyk et al., 2003; Roderick, 1993; Blyth, Simmons, & Carlton-Ford, 1983), self-esteem (Blyth et al., 1983; Eccles, Wigfield, Reuman & Maclver, 1987) as well as their mental health and well-being (Zeedyk et al., 2003). During this period there appears to be a certain amount of stress and worry and some of the consequences that may be present are: a decrease in academic performance; school attendance; self-esteem (Collins, 2000; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Reyes, Gillock, Kobus & Sanchez, 2000). However, although there is some evidence to suggest that the transition period leads to a ‘dip’ in attainment, it is unclear as to the
part that transition may play in this (West et al., 2010) and the social hurdles that pupils are experiencing may also lead to slower progress (Galton et al., 1999). West et al. (2010) also level three main criticisms towards the existing research on transitions: the research is characterised by a range of perspectives and methodologies; lack of attention on school effects; failure to focus on the impact of the transition itself.

Therefore, although the transition to secondary school is in itself difficult, certain individual factors may also make the pupil more vulnerable to a poorer transition to secondary school. These include those who have lower ability; more transitional stress and anxiety; being female (though gender is not a consistent feature in the research evidence, West et al., 2010); a combination of socio-economic status and race (Anderson et al., 2000); younger age (Nisbet & Entwistle, 1969; Galton, Morrison & Pell, 2000; West et al., 2010); ethnicity (Graham & Hill, 2003); low self-image or self-esteem (McGee et al., 2003; West et al., 2010); those unprepared for secondary school (West et al., 2010); less able (West et al., 2010); behaviour concerns or aggressive pupils (Berndt & Mekos, 1995; Anderson et al., 2000). Some of these characteristics are also in line with the risk factors literature discussed above. In contrast to this, the research carried out by West et al. (2010) found that the pupils who had a positive transition to secondary were those that primary teachers described as more aggressive, who came from a lower class background, who were already disengaged from primary school and who had a friend in secondary school. Although this finding is somewhat controversial and in contrast to conventional wisdom around transition, it highlights the different facets of transition and that transition is not one-dimensional (West et al., 2010). Galton et al. (1999) point out that although transition is a difficult period in a child’s life only a small minority become seriously disaffected. Thus highlighting the complexities of studying the process of transition.

The research carried out by Evangelou et al. (2008) into transitions at the secondary school level identifies those factors that are linked to successful transitions and these are outlined as: developing new friendships; improving self-esteem and confidence; being settled in school so there are no concerns for parents; showing an increase in school work; becoming accustomed to the school routines and organisation; experiencing curriculum continuity. They identified that the children who received lots of support during their transition from primary school were more likely to have a successful transition. However, those children who experienced problems with different teachers and subjects, bullying, and difficulty making new
friends, were more likely to have a negative experience during the transition to secondary school.

Bloyce and Frederickson (2012) evaluated a Transfer Support Team (TST) transition intervention for 457 pupils in Year 6 and found positive results for pupils who had been supported through the TST programme during the transition phase, particularly on school concerns that were identified. They also criticise previous research in the area of primary to secondary transfer as having three key limitations:

1. There is a huge variation in the research methodologies that have been used, from small scale to some longitudinal studies;
2. There is little focus on institutional differences in the schools that may have an impact on pupil transition;
3. The research focuses on describing the ‘experience’ of transition or on post-intervention outcomes, rather than linking the two together.

Anderson et al. (2000) purport how a poor transition can often lead to the pupil feeling disengaged with the school as an institution and lead to conflict. Their experiences will either accelerate or initiate the disengagement process from the school (Roderick, 1993). Becoming disengaged with the school can be seen as the beginning of the child’s route which could eventually lead to exclusion or ‘dropping out’ (Finn, 1989).

Anderson et al. (2000) recommend the following three components that need to be present for successful systemic transitions:

1. *The need for comprehensive efforts* (these are carefully planned, multi-faceted and long-term);
2. *The need for parental involvement*;
3. *The need to create a sense of community and belonging* (this is essential for the receiving schools to incorporate this).

In the current research, the above three components are something that the two participating schools aimed to achieve through the use of the SFPSMs.

Taking into consideration that transition is a stressful and often difficult phase for pupils it appears that the children identified for this research would be even more vulnerable for being ‘at risk’ of exclusion once they get to secondary school, as the
transition process would exacerbate the risk factors that were used to initially identify them for the research.

2.6. The role of the Educational Psychologist (EP), including multi-agency working

Although there has been a long standing debate about what constitutes the role of the EP (Gillham, 1978; Farrell et al., 2006) the EP role can be described as comprising of: consultation; assessment; intervention; training; research (Scottish Executive Education Department [SEED], 2002). This work can be achieved by working at the levels of the individual, whole school and LA level (SEED, 2002; Farrell et al, 2006, DfEE, 2000; Curran, Gersch & Wolfendale, 2003). The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) Working Party (2000) highlight the aim of the profession “to promote child development and learning through the application of psychology by working with individual and groups of children, teachers and other adults in schools, families, other LEA officers, health and social services and other agencies” (p. 5). Fallon, Woods and Rooney (2010) succinctly describe the role of the EP as:

EPs are fundamentally scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of children and young people (CYP), psychological skills, knowledge and understanding through the functions of consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual level across educational community and care settings, with a variety of role partners. (p. 4)

Historically, the role of the EP has been to have significant involvement with SEN, and although this continues, this is now changing. EPs are becoming more involved in working with CYP with a wide range of needs, such as: SEBD; Looked After Children (LAC); adoption and fostering panels; Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) panels; and critical incident teams (Association of Educational Psychologists [AEP], 2008). Alongside this, EPs are now specialising in particular areas such as early years, autism, behaviour, therapeutic interventions and hearing impaired which helps strengthen working collaboratively with other professionals. Therefore, the EP role is now changing from doing not only statutory work (Farrell et al, 2006) but also as “assessment, consultation, advice and training to early year’s settings, schools, families and the Local Education Authority” (DfES, 2005b).
When thinking specifically about the role of the EP in relation to the area of SEBD the 1994 Code of Practice (Department of Education [DfE], 1994) explains that the EP has a key role to play in the assessment of such CYP and in order to make a full assessment the EP needs to address a range of factors including the “child’s adaptive, personal and social skills; self-image, interests and behaviour” (para. 3.113, p. 76).

The SSEP involved in the current research brings with her the knowledge of child development, experience in working as a behaviour specialist and being trained in the use of PCP approaches. Within the context of the current research project the role of the SSEP has been as a trainer and a facilitator for the SFPSMs to take place. She carried out all the initial preparation work in involving different agencies in the project and engaged potential schools to participate through her personal connections with schools and through other professionals. In addition to this, she prepared materials for the preparation work to be carried out with the pupils and also dedicated time to key members of staff who carried out the preparation work with the pupils by providing them with training on how to use the materials. She then facilitated the SFPSMs within the schools with all the pupils identified to take part in the research. The role of the SSEP has been instrumental and fundamental in initiating this research and ensuring that it continues to feature highly amongst schools priorities in meeting the needs of the pupils identified in the research.

2.6.1. Multi-agency working.

The initial meetings and discussions that took place for this research project were significantly influenced by a range of multi-agency professionals, as they were part of the ‘steering group’. In these steering group meetings professionals from school, Social Care, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the Police, Education Welfare Service, Behaviour Support Service and the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) were involved. However, as the actual SFPSMs took place for the pupils the level of input from these different multi-agency professionals declined and only those professionals who were continuing to support the pupils or had some involvement with the pupils were involved in the SFPSM i.e. school staff and Social Care professionals. Despite this, the researcher felt that this was an integral aim of the research and one of the purposes behind the research was to promote multi-agency work. However, due to a range of factors this aspect of the research was not fully achieved, although the intention was there, therefore, the
following section outlines multi-agency working, the benefits and barriers and the
different types of multi-agency work that can exist.

Historically, Bronfenbrenner (1970) wrote that he felt a national approach to working
collaboratively was vital. This was later reinforced by the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) whereby the view that multi-agency working should support children with
SEN, particularly those with SEBD. The Children Act (1989) took this further and
emphasised that collaborative working should be a national, as well as local,
initiative. The government’s agenda to enforce collaborative working is reflected in
previous legislation (Education Act, 1996; SEN CoP, 1994). Currently, there is an
emphasis and importance placed by the government on multi-agency working and
to plan and implement solutions for children and young people together (Webb &
Vulliamy, 2004), particularly those identified with SEBD (Lloyd, Stead & Kendrick,
2003). The principal tenets within the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda (DfES,
2004), the Children Act (2004) and the Children’s National Service Framework
Standard for Hospital Services (Department of Health [DoH], 2003) emphasise the
importance of multi-agency work between professionals to meet the needs of CYP,
which is not restricted by professional boundaries (Department for Children Schools
and Families [DCSF], 2007). The SEN CoP (DfES, 2001) also sets a framework
within which health, education, social care and voluntary organisations can work
together to facilitate early intervention and joint planning effectively. In various
legislation (ECM [DfES], 2004; DfES, 2005b; DfE, 2011a) the key elements for
success are multi-agency working, joint commissioning, common assessment,
common skills, information sharing and workforce reform (Carter, Cummings &
Cooper, 2005), reinforcing the importance of joint working.

Many studies have looked at the need for multi-agency working between health,
education and social care particularly for: children in care (Biehal, Clayden, Stein &
Wade, 1995); disaffected and excluded pupils (Webb & Vulliamy, 2001); child
protection (Hallett & Birchall, 1992); child mental health (Mental Health Foundation,
1999); disabled and chronically ill children (Sloper, 1999). Although there has been
recognition of multi-agency working it appears that this is still quite difficult to
achieve in practice (Sloper, 2004).

Numerous studies have found some of the benefits of working together which
include resources being pooled together and, increased accessibility to services by
users (Costongs & Springnett, 1997; Richardson & Asthana, 2006; Whyte, 1997).
Webb and Vulliamy (2004) found that the benefits of working in a multi-agency
manner ensured the assessments for pupils and support provided to pupils was delivered efficiently and quickly. They also found that the support workers acted as ‘go-betweens’ between the families and all the agencies working with an individual child, which supported communication and links. Tett (2005) found that multi-agency working can contribute to social inclusion.

Despite the many advantages stated for multi-agency work many studies have shown some of the drawbacks of working in such a way: lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities (Sloper, 2004); negative professional stereotypes (Sloper, 2004); the erosion of having an individual sense of identity (Frost & Robinson, 2007); the conflicts between different professionals cultures and knowledge bases (Robinson, Anning & Frost, 2005).

In terms of working within a multi-agency setting parents have reported difficulties of collaboration when many agencies are involved in the process (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001; Norris & Closs, 2003), particularly as the needs of children and young people do not fit neatly into separate agency compartments (Sloper, 2004). Parents and pupils emphasise the importance of having a ‘key worker’, through whom services are co-ordinated and planned (Sloper, 2004) and there is evidence to suggest that families with key workers report improved quality of life compared to those families who do not have key workers (Liabo, Newman, Stephens & Lowe, 2001). Pinkus (2005) identifies four principles for effective partnership working that can overcome some of the difficulties that may occur during multi-agency work: “consensus about purpose; clarity about who is involved and why; equal distribution of power between partners and implementing transparency and accountability mechanisms for monitoring the partnership” (p. 184). Sloper (2004) identifies a range of factors that promote successful multi-agency working:

- clear and realistic aims;
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities;
- commitment of both senior and frontline staff;
- strong leadership;
- an agreed timetable for implementation of changes;
- linking projects into other planning and decision-making processes and ensuring good systems of communication at all levels. (pp. 575-576).

Multi-agency working is important but it needs to be well-co-ordinated, well planned and monitored or it can lead to a huge investment of time from all the professionals with little return (Visser, Cole & Daniels, 2002; Soan, 2006). As school exclusion is a multi-level problem (family/home/teacher and the school as an organisation) there is the suggestion of a multi-agency approach to tackle this as being the most effective (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007). In fact, the study conducted by
Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot (2007) aimed to investigate if a ‘new, intensive, multi-disciplinary intervention’, specifically for pupils excluded from primary school, helped to reduce subsequent number of excluded days and any re-occurring emotional and behavioural difficulties. Their sample included 124 cases of CYP excluded from primary school between the ages of 4 and 12, and involvement in the project lasted for 19 months. They used a randomised control trial (RCT) to demonstrate if the ‘intervention’ was more effective than the ‘routine care’ that pupils would generally receive in secondary school. In their research they used a mixture of both quantitative (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, Health of the Nation Outcome Scale for Children and Adolescents, General Health Questionnaire) and qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews) thus enhancing the validity of the research. However, their use of a RCT with an already vulnerable group of pupils raises questions about the ethics of using such an approach. They found that the ‘intervention’ group showed a reduction in the number of excluded days in secondary school compared to the control group. The schools who were part of the project reported positive responses with 90% of the schools reporting that the input of the multi-disciplinary team was helpful. The key finding that is relevant to the current research is that 62.5% of schools reported a ‘positive change’ in the pupils’ emotional state.

A key benefit of having a multi-agency approach to address exclusions has been the important relationship between school and home and building upon this to support children with SEBD (Panayiotopoulos, 2004; OfSTED, 1999). A central aspect of this research is to build upon the relationship with parents and engage them in the process of multi-agency working and working collaboratively with their child in order to prevent exclusions.

Research has shown that the most effective projects have been those that involved social and health services, housing, police, community education and non-governmental organisations (Tett, 2005; Semmens, 2001; Whitty, Aggleton, Gamarnikow & Tyler, 1998). Research suggests that having a key individual or a ‘key worker’ is also seen as a supportive feature of home school relationships (Webb & Vulliamy, 2004; DfE, 2011a).

Different types of models for joint working have been identified in the literature (Cameron and Lart, 2003; Atkinson, Wilkin, Stott, Doherty & Kinder, 2002) and the model that will be considered for this research is the one suggested by Watson, Townsley and Abbott (2002), which is outlined below:
=> **Multidisciplinary working** (individuals working in a single agency and coordination with other services is rare).

=> **Interdisciplinary working** (individuals from different agencies separately assess the needs of the child and family and come together to discuss findings and set goals).

=> **Transdisciplinary working** (individuals from different agencies work together jointly and share aims, information, tasks and responsibilities).

Watson et al. (2002) suggest that transdisciplinary working is the one that would be rated the most highly by children and families, though there is currently no evidence to back this claim. The type of multi-agency working that fits closely to the current piece of research is the ‘transdisciplinary working’ model, as all the professionals from the different agencies initially came together to discuss the project, aims of the project and future planning. However, this multi-agency working then declined dependent upon the needs of each individual pupil and involvement the pupil had from other agencies. Ultimately the SFPSMs became in-house school meetings carried out for pupils who had been identified to take part in the research project with minimal or no outside agency involvement apart from the SSEP and Social Care in the case of one pupil.

### 2.7. Pupil voice in relation to exclusion

The central and fundamental component of the current research was to look at the views of the CYP involved in the SFPSM and their views and thoughts on the process of the meetings. Therefore, an essential factor to look at and consider for the literature review was to look at the views of CYP and their ‘voice’.

Historically, there has been little research looking at the views of young people who may be affected by exclusion (Pomeroy, 1999; Munn & Lloyd, 2005) and some researchers have gone as far as saying that views from marginalised groups in society tend to be ignored, particularly in educational decision-making (Rose & Shevlin, 2004). In more recent research there has been a focus to look at pupil voice with regard to exclusions (De Pear, 1997; Pomeroy, 1999; Pomeroy, 2000) and the importance of pupil involvement in terms of their co-operation and motivation (Pomeroy, 1999). Rudduck, Chaplain and Wallace (1996) comment on the importance of capturing the views of young people who may be excluded. Views from excluded pupils suggest that they would like to be seen and valued as
people and for schools to understand and respect their home circumstances (Munn & Lloyd, 2005). The very nature of CYP who may be ‘at risk’ or vulnerable to exclusion have been found to be particularly ‘hard to reach’ (Chilokoa & McKie, 2007) largely due to the complex nature of their difficulties. Therefore, many researchers have pointed out the importance of understanding young people’s perspectives (Roller, 1998), particularly in enhancing the decision-making process and their self-esteem (Norwich & Kelly, 2006; Sinclair & Franklin, 2000). Therefore, the importance of eliciting the views of pupils, particularly in relation to exclusion has been highlighted by many researchers (Gersch & Nolan, 1994; Harris et al., 2006).

In terms of involving pupils in meetings, within the context of the current research of a multi-agency meeting, Newton (1995) makes the salient point of suggesting having a structure to the discussion, as this was essential to achieve success.

Although there appears to be a growing emphasis on including pupils in decisions about their lives some research has raised the question around the ‘appropriateness’ of including all pupils in decisions about their education (Male, 2000). In the research carried out by Male (2000) two thirds of the head teachers interviewed felt that pupils with severe learning difficulties would not be able to understand the targets set for them. However, in the current research project through the context of the SFPSMs and having a ‘visual’ element to the meetings meant that the pupils were able to understand what was being discussed in the meetings and they had the opportunity to discuss any issues or anything that they did not understand in the SFPSM with their key worker in school. Therefore, although there is the link between SEBD, learning difficulties and language difficulties (Benner, Nelson & Epstein, 2002) this was not an area of difficulty with the sample population in the current research project and strategies were in place to support pupils who might experience these difficulties.

2.8. Frameworks considered for the SFPSM

One of the first things to consider when planning for the SFPSM was to consider the range of frameworks that could potentially be used. Although the key aim for the meetings was to ensure that the pupil was the central focus in the SFPSM it was still important to consider a range of approaches that were available for meeting the aims of the SFPSM. This section outlines the key frameworks that were considered for the SFPSM, resulting in the subsequent selection and development of the ‘actual’ framework that was used in the SFPSM.
2.8.1 Conjoint Behavioural Consultation (CBC).

One of the frameworks considered was the CBC framework (Sheridan, Eagle & Doll, 2006; Sheridan et al., 2009). This framework is an indirect model of service delivery whereby parents, teachers and a consultant all work together to address the academic, social and behavioural needs of pupils to enhance continuity between home and school, therefore allowing multi-agency collaboration to meet the needs of the young person. The framework follows a four-stage problem solving model: conjoint problem identification; problem analysis; plan implementation; plan evaluation (Sheridan, Kratchowill & Bergan, 1996). The CBC model has been used within the education context and has been successfully used with CYP with a range of learning and behaviour needs (Colton & Sheridan, 1998; Galloway & Sheridan, 1994; Sheridan, Eagle, Cowan & Mickelson, 2001; Sheridan Kratchowill & Elliott, 1990; Weiner, Sheridan & Jenson, 1998; Wilkinson, 2005). The study by Colton and Sheridan (1998) used the CBC model to share the development and implementation of interventions for pupils with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in order to enhance co-operative peer interactions. Although the sample size was quite small (3 pupils), they found positive effects on pupil’s co-operative peer interactions. Similarly, the work carried out by Wilkinson (2005; 2005a) looked at the use of CBC models with pupils with a range of EBD and found positive effects and positive treatment effects for up to four weeks after intervention. Again, the sample size used in both studies was small (1 and 2 pupils), which brings into question the generalisability of the findings and also the reliability and validity of the observational ratings of the teacher for the pupil with Asperger Syndrome. A further limitation of the research by Wilkinson (2005) was around the researcher being unable to carry out observation of the pupil’s behaviour in the home setting, which would have provided a more holistic picture of his behaviour in different settings and enhanced the reliability and validity of findings.

Although the CBC framework uses problem-solving consultation meetings with parents and other professionals to meet the needs of the CYP and incorporates a multi-agency perspective, it does not place the CYP’s views anywhere within the framework. The key idea behind the use of the CBC model is for the ‘adults’ in a CYPs life to work collaboratively in a problem-solving solving process and to identify ‘targets and devise a plan’ for the CYP to work towards. Despite this model enhancing collaborative work between professionals and between home and school the view of the CYP is not taken into account, as they are not part of the CBC process. Pupil voice is pertinent to the current piece of research, as research
suggests that pupils who are identified as having SEBD and those who have been excluded often feel that their voices are not listened to (Rose & Shevlin, 2004; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Gersch & Nolan, 1994; Harris et al., 2006). Therefore giving the CYP in the research a ‘voice’ and chance to speak is the underlying component in achieving positive outcomes through the SFPSMs. As a fundamental element of the research is to look at the views of the pupils and enable a child-centred meeting to take place the CBC model is not suitable in addressing these needs and therefore other models will need to be considered in order to ensure a child-centred element to the meetings that take place.

2.8.2 Solution-focused approaches.

Various frameworks have been developed to assist EPs in searching for solutions and change (Stobie, Boyle, & Woolfson, 2005). A prominent approach that has emerged within the work of the EP has been the use of solution-focused brief therapy approaches (SFBT) (Stobie, et al., 2005). SFBT was initially developed by de Shazer (1985) and colleagues and developed from clinical practice. The fundamental components of SFBT are focusing the individual on when they will know that the problem has been solved, setting future goals, eliciting exceptions to the problem and identifying the individual’s strengths and resources (Bond, Woods, Humphrey, Symes & Green, 2013, in press). SFBT is a strengths-based approach (DfE, 2011c) and is placed within the realm of Positive Psychology, whereby the emphasis is on using the resources that the individual possesses as a means of them moving forward. The focus is on the strengths of the client and supporting individuals to take an active role in identifying exceptions and doing more of what works for them (Berg, 1994; de Shazer, 1994). The fundamental tenets of SFBT lie in the use of ‘exception’ questions; ‘miracle’ questions; and scaling (Stobie et al., 2005). The ways in which EPs use SFBT has been highlighted in Stobie et al. (2005) and is essentially used for single case studies, though there is evidence that using solution-focused approaches have also been extended to work with groups, in-service training, teacher consultation and multi-agency meetings (Redpath & Harker, 1999). The study by Stobie et al. (2005) highlights that 54% of EPs use solution-focused approaches with groups. Research carried out by Atkinson, Corban and Templeton (2011) has also highlighted that EPs champion the use of SFBT due to the pragmatic value it brings. In a recent review asking EPs about the types of therapeutic interventions they use, SFBT was the most popular therapy used at 84.1% (Atkinson, Bragg, Squires, Muscutt & Wasilewski, 2011).
Solution-focused frameworks have been found to be effective when working with pupils with academic and social concerns (Littrell, Malia, & Vandrewood, 1995), for solution-focused groups in schools (LaFountain & Garner, 1996), improving academic results and in dealing with behaviours such as aggression, co-operation and truancy (Franklin, Moore & Hopson, 2008; Newsome, 2004). The study by Franklin et al. (2008) found positive evidence when a SFBT intervention was used with children identified as having SEBD and there was evidence of teachers reporting a decrease of externalising and internalising behaviour problems. Similarly, in an evaluation of intervention for ‘at risk’ youths with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties and their families, Wilmshurst (2002) found improvements in problem behaviour, externalising behaviour and social skills. Evidence suggests that solution focused approaches can be successful in a variety of settings and using different client groups (Alexander & Sked, 2010). Some of the many aspects of SFBT that make it particularly appealing to EPs is the time involved in using this approach (Durrant, 1992; Murphy, 1996; Murphy & Duncan, 1997; Redpath & Harker, 1999; Rhodes, 1993; Rhodes & Ajmal, 1995) and that systemic issues can be addressed through this approach (Murphy, 1994). In the review of the literature looking at the effectiveness of SFBT with children and families, Bond et al. (2013, in press) found preliminary evidence of SFBT being effective in improving both internalising and externalising behaviour in children.

Based on the studies cited above and the positive impact of SFBT when working with individuals identified as having SEBD (Bond et al., 2013, in press; Franklin et al., 2008; Newsome, 2004; Wilsrhmurst, 2002) there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the use of SFBT within a school setting is an effective approach that can be used, particularly with individuals displaying SEBD (both externalising and internalising behaviour). This leads on to the conclusion that this would be a reasonable approach to adopt when working with pupils with SEBD, as it focuses on their strengths and enables them to find resources within themselves which can be applied to a ‘positive change process’ (Bond et al., 2013, in press) in order to achieve goals and targets that they have set themselves.

2.8.3. Person-Centred Planning (PCP).

As the focus of the research is essentially having the pupil at the heart of the process it was important to consider approaches that incorporate the views of pupils in meetings, and essentially have the pupil at the centre of the meeting.
There are a range of terms used in the literature that can be taken to mean that the pupil or the ‘person’ is the focal point of any intervention, review or meeting (Sanderson, 2000; DOH, 2009). The actual term used in the literature is ‘person-centred planning’ (PCP) (Sanderson, 2000), however, as the focus of this research is on the ‘pupil’, the term ‘pupil-centred planning’ will also be used for the purpose of this thesis to mean that the pupil or the young person is central to any intervention, review or meeting.

PCP is fundamentally a process of discovering what individuals want and thinking of ways that they can achieve those goals through continually listening and learning (DoH, 2009; Sanderson, 2000). These actions are then acted upon in collaboration with their family and friends and a problem-solving approach is used to ‘develop a holistic long term plan’. Sanderson (2000) outlines the following five key features that are essential to PCP:

1. The person is at the centre;
2. Family members and friends are partners in planning;
3. The plan reflects what is important to the person, their capacities, and what support they require;
4. The plan results in actions that are about life, not just services, and reflect what is possible, not just what is available;
5. The plan results in on-going listening, learning, and further action.

Having established the principles that underlie the PCP approach it is now important to think about how these would translate into an approach that could be used with children and young people while ensuring that they remain central to the process. The literature suggests the following approaches can be used in PCP: essential lifestyle planning; personal futures planning (DoH, 2009); planning alternative tomorrows with hope (PATH); Making action plans (MAPS) (Sanderson, 2000; DoH, 2009). In addition to these approaches Meadan, Shelden, Appel and DeGrazia (2010) outline the following approaches to PCP: Circle of Friends (Perske, 1988); Choosing Outcomes and Accommodations for Children (COACH; Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 1998); Group Action Planning (GAP; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1992).
A potential approach to consider is the one adapted by Hayes (2004), whereby she used a visual annual review process at times of transition for pupils, particularly those who may have limited understanding of language. Hayes (2004) found the visual annual review process received positive feedback from the pupil and professionals involved and is a valuable child-centred review tool. The visual annual review tool originates from an adaptation of the Making Action Plans (MAPS) child-centred approach developed by Forest, Pearpoint and O’Brien (1996). This is a holistic review process and a planning tool which looks at an individual’s strengths and difficulties before looking at the dream for their future and plans for first steps to get there. MAPS is essentially a collaborative planning process that incorporates all the key people in a pupils life and brings them together. The MAPS is facilitated by two individuals: a facilitator and a recorder (Forest et al., 1996; Hayes, 2004). The information is recorded on a large piece of paper graphically to ensure visual access to information being discussed and to inspire further thought. Hayes (2004) also highlights the importance of the preparation of the pupil before the review and running the review itself and provides guidance on how to do this in her paper. Research evidence evaluating the MAPS process has also shown positive outcomes from those involved in the process (McCloskey, 2001).

The literature suggests that PCP has generally been used in the Health and Social Care field particularly with those individuals who are described as having a disability (Robertson, et al., 2005; DOH, 2009; Meadan et al., 2010). Robertson et al. (2005) carried out a longitudinal study of the PCP approach and the impact this has on the life experiences of 93 individuals with ‘intellectual disabilities’ and found that PCP had a positive impact on the following areas of their lives: social networks; contact with family; contact with friends; more choice making; community involvement; activities schedule. The research also identified those factors that supported a PCP meeting and these are outlined as:

1. Having a facilitator who is committed to PCP;
2. Having a facilitator who has the planning as part of their job role;
3. Ensuring that the individual that the meeting is about is personally involved;
4. Having a person-centred team;
5. Having the active involvement of managers.

Although the factors identified by Robertson et al. (2005) are in relation to PCP meetings that took place for individuals with intellectual disabilities within residential services, it will be interesting to see if any of the factors outlined above will be
relevant to the current research project. Therefore, these will be further discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to the findings of the current research project and potential implications for the future use of SFPSMs.

This approach is now also being used with individuals who are identified as having SEN in ensuring that successful placements are made for individuals with their needs as a priority (Meadan et al., 2010).

A recent study carried out by Taylor-Brown (2012), which is the ‘closest hit’ for the current research, used a PCP approach with children identified as having SEBD at the Year 9 transition phase from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. This study found that through the use of a PCP approach the ‘power’ imbalances between school staff, parents and pupils were reduced which enabled the participants and their families to engage more in the process. However, some barriers through using PCP have been identified such as: difficulty in scheduling meetings for all members to attend; involving others apart from the service providers; difficulty in involving peers; opposing views of members in the meeting (Everson & Zhang, 2000). Although it is important to be mindful of the fact that the majority of these studies were carried out in the Health sector for adults with intellectual disabilities the barriers or difficulties mentioned above are also likely to be applicable when PCP approaches are used with CYP within the education setting.

2.8.4. Knowledge contribution.

The studies that are the ‘closest hits’ to the current research project are: Evangelou et al. (2008) and Taylor-Brown (2012) and these will be looked at in detail below.

The research by Evangelou et al. (2008), which looked at transitions, is a ‘closest hit’ for the current piece of research as it looks at the views of pupils going through the Year 6/7 transition process. Evangelou et al. (2008) conducted a longitudinal study that focused on transition, using questionnaires and semi-structured interview methodology in order to identify factors that support successful transition. The similarity between this study and the current piece of research is that they are both focusing on the views of pupils at the transition phase, in order to uncover good practice. However, the differences lie in the sample, sample size, length of the study, methodology and the aspect that is being looked at. The study by Evangelou et al. (2008) is a longitudinal study and has a large sample size (550), though the sample itself was not identified specifically for children with SEBD, rather CYP were recruited based upon their socio-economic status and their gender. Their study
focuses in depth on twelve case studies, which is more than the current research. However, the current research aims to establish facilitators and barriers from the perspective of all individuals involved in the research in order to provide an in-depth view of SFPSMs. This is also the key difference between the current research and the study by Evangelou et al. (2008), as the focus in the study by Evangelou et al. (2008) is looking at transition, whereas the current study is aiming to look at the process of the SFPSM and identifying facilitators and barriers within this approach from the perspectives of all those involved.

The study by Taylor-Brown (2012) looked at the views of 3 pupils identified as presenting with SEBD, at the Year 9 transition phase, and their experiences of the person-centred review process. The study used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences that the participants had of their PCP meetings. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyse the data and key themes were identified such as the expectation of reciprocity, leading to a reduction of power imbalances and encouraged participation from the pupils and their families.

This study is the most relevant and similar to the current research. However, although the study by Taylor-Brown (2012) seeks the views of pupils with SEBD experiencing person-centred reviews, it does not go beyond that. It does not look at the ‘process’ of the person-centred reviews, or the ways in which the reviews could be improved for informing future practice, which is a central aim of the current research. This study also differs from the current research in that it is looking at the Year 9 transition phase, whereas the current research is interested in the Year 6/7 transition phase. The current study is also aiming to create a holistic picture of the SFPSM from the perspectives of all those involved, whereas the study by Taylor-Brown (2012) is focusing solely on the views of the pupils. Therefore, although the study by Taylor-Brown (2012) is an excellent starting point the current study aims to promote and uncover knowledge in the area of SFPSM (or PCP meetings) and how these can be improved in future practice, when they are used, and aims to triangulate the views of not just the pupils but also the adults involved in the process of supporting the pupils.

One of the limitations of the Taylor-Brown (2012) research is the fact that it is a small scale study (looking at the views of 3 pupils) and questions can be raised around the generalisability of the findings. Despite the limitations, the study found positive results for the use of PCP approaches.
Therefore, although research has been carried out using the PCP approach with pupils identified as having SEBD at the Year 9 transition phase (Taylor-Brown, 2012) and research has looked at the views of pupils and families at the Year 6/7 transition phase (Evangelou et al., 2008), there has not been any research that has aimed to combine the two approaches, whereby pupils identified with SEBD at the Year 6/7 transition are asked about their views and experiences of a SFPSM (or a PCP meeting) in order to establish facilitators and barriers and develop future practice. This is the gap in the literature that will be addressed through this thesis.

Essentially, the research carried out in the area of interest and relevance for this thesis has generally used a qualitative approach, to provide an in-depth and rich account of events and views of those involved in the process. The focus of the current research is also upon providing a rich, in-depth account of the views of those individuals, particularly pupils, around the process of the SFPSMs that they were (and still are) involved in and to build up a picture of their views/accounts about the process that they have been involved in, which means using qualitative methods of data collection. The research is also a pilot project for future development and implementation of the SFPSMs.

2.8.5. Selection and rationale for the SFPSM format and framework.

A detailed description of the 'actual' format adopted for the SFPSM is provided below and in Appendix A. A brief overview of the reasoning for the selection of the SFPSM is given here to provide the reader with information around the approach that was used and why, followed by the format of the SFPSM.

As the overarching focus of the SFPSM was considering the strengths and resources individuals had and to ensure that they were central to the SFPSM, the underlying psychology behind the SFPSM was Positive Psychology, as it focuses on the strengths and virtues that individuals possess (Seligman, 1999; Sheldon & King, 2001) and the conditions and processes that support optimal functioning (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

The focus of this research was to look at and provide a positive experience for the pupils identified to take part in the research through the use of the SFPSM during their transition from Year 6 to Year 7. Therefore it was felt that using some of the solution-focused principles would be beneficial for the pupils in the research, as the focus would be upon looking at their strengths and how they could utilise those strengths to support them in their areas of need. It was also felt that the SFPSM
should be a positive experience for pupils and it was important to re-frame some of the negative experiences they had had within the school context into positive ones. Therefore, it was felt that using some elements of SFBT within the SFPSM would be beneficial for the pupils and research has shown SFBT has been effective with children and families in improving children’s behaviour and academic results (DfE, 2011c). It was also felt that there should be a visual element to the SFPSM, as this would engage participants in the process and Hayes (2004) found the use of visual annual transition reviews received positive feedback from participants. This led to the development of the SFPSM.

The underlying fundamental principles of the SFPSMs were based on the principles of the PCP approach (Sanderson, 2000), as the key to the meetings was the pupil being ‘central’ to the meetings and being the key focal point of discussion and collaboration. Therefore, the SFBT approach was used in conjunction with elements of the PCP approach (Sanderson, 2000) and visual annual reviews (Hayes, 2004). Studies have shown successful implementation of the SFBT approach when it has been used in conjunction with other approaches such as motivational interviewing (Violeta Enea, 2009; Atkinson & Amesu, 2007). Although no research has been carried out using a combination of SFBT and PCP to explore the use of solution-focused principles within a PCP approach, the current research aims to use the two approaches mentioned and combine them to carry out SFPSMs.

In terms of the approach selected to use with the pupils, after considerable research it was felt that a solution-focused multi-agency meeting (Alexander & Sked, 2010) using a form of a visual review (Hayes, 2004), with elements of the PCP approach (Sanderson, 2000) would be the most appropriate in placing the pupil at the centre of the meeting and in ascertaining the views of the pupils, parents and professionals involved. The format for these meetings can be found in Appendix A (though some elements changed depending on the needs of the individual pupil) and the exact process for the preparation of the SFPSM of each pupil is given in Figure 2.2 below. To provide the reader with a general overview of the way each SFPSM was conducted and the link that it has to the ‘psychology’ behind it an explanation is given below, though it must be noted that there were some minor differences in the pre and post transition SFPSMs:
The pupil is prepared before the meeting by the teaching assistant and given information of what to expect in the meeting, who will be there, the contribution they will need to make and the format of the meeting (PCP);

All individuals are welcomed and tea/coffee/juice and biscuits are provided to create a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere (PCP);

The facilitator explains the purpose of the meeting and the way that it will be conducted and asks how individuals will know that it has been successful (SFBT);

Individuals are invited to write what they ‘admire’ about the pupil on to the flipchart that is on the wall (PCP, Positive Psychology);

Individuals are asked to make a contribution on the flipchart paper on what is going well/what is not going so well for the pupil (PCP);

The group is then asked to write down their main concerns and these are framed in a positive way (SFBT);

The group is asked to think of ways or ‘solutions’ to the concerns outlined, which are written down on the flipchart paper (SFBT);

An ‘action plan’ (What? By whom? When?) is produced based upon the suggestions from the group around supporting the pupil in their main areas of difficulty (SFBT/PCP);

A future meeting date is set (as is appropriate);

After the meeting the minutes of the meeting are sent to all participants by the SSEP.

In terms of preparation for the Teaching Assistants (TAs) the SSEP went into all the schools and spent some time training those TAs who would be supporting the pupil in the SFPSSM for the preparatory work they needed to do with the pupils before the SFPSSM. This essentially involved a handout that the TA was asked to complete with the pupil before the meeting (sample sheets from the hand out be found in Appendix B) and the format and process of the meetings was explained to the TA by the SSEP, with opportunities to ask any questions that they had.
The approach combined elements of the PCP approach, in the sense that in the meeting the pupil was central to the meeting and was the main focus of the meeting and this was achieved through the use of solution-focused questions and all information was written on flipchart paper and visually displayed on the walls in the room as each individual contributed to the meeting. The pre-transition meeting began with asking how everyone would know if the meeting had been successful, which was followed by asking ‘what we like and admire about the pupil’ (which all individuals had to answer by writing this on the flipchart paper on the wall). This was then followed by asking the CYP about Year 7, what they were looking forward to and what their worries were. The focus was then changed to the present and the group were asked what is going well for the CYP, what is not going so well and what a small change would look like. The main concerns were then discussed and written on the flipchart, resulting in an ‘action plan’ to be followed by all those involve. Copies of the minutes from the meeting were then sent out to all individuals who were part of the meeting. Similarly, the post-transition meeting in secondary school began with asking the group what they like and admire about the pupil, which was written on the flipchart paper on the wall. As the participants wrote on the flipchart paper they were also asked by the SSEP to think about the ‘actions agreed’ from the previous meeting and these were discussed and reviewed when the ‘main concerns’ and ‘how to’ areas were discussed. This was then followed by the ‘action plan’ stage and any ‘actions’ that had not been completed or were on-going issues were also included in the ‘action plan’. (See Appendix A for a full description).
2.9. Summary of the literature and research questions

2.9.1. Summary of the literature.

As the focus of this research has a variety of elements it is somewhat difficult to summarise how all the parts are interconnected, which they undoubtedly are. The flow chart below (Figure 2.3) provides an illustration of all the interconnected elements of this research (with the research aims being central) and their relation to each other.

![Flow Chart](image)

Figure 2.3. Connecting the literature.

The fundamental aim of the current research was to look at the views of pupils who had been identified as being ‘at risk’ or vulnerable to becoming excluded during the Year 6/7 transition phase and their views of the experience they had with a SFPSM. It also included obtaining the views of their key workers, school staff and their parents, which meant that some individuals from other agencies were also involved in the process. The view of the SSEP who facilitated and initiated the process was also sought to provide an overarching perspective of the process. The research was about uncovering the ‘process’ of the SFPSM and looking at facilitators and barriers to the approach. Therefore, the above literature review has aimed to cover all the aspects that were relevant to the research. A brief summary of studies in all
the relevant areas of the literature review are provided in the section below, ending with an outline of the research questions.

Although there have been numerous studies carried out looking at exclusions (Charlton, et al., 2004; Daniels, et al., 2003; Vulliamy & Webb, 2001), multi-agency work to reduce exclusions in primary school (Pavey & Visser, 2003; Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007), secondary school (Bagley & Pritchard, 1998; Rose, 2008; Webb & Vulliamy, 2004) looking at the views of pupils who are at risk of exclusion (Harris et al., 2006; Hawkins, 2011), the views of pupils excluded from school (Pomeroy, 1999; Munn & Lloyd, 2005; Rose & Shevlin, 2004), transition (Anderson et al., 2000), pupil views around transition (Tobbell, 2003; Zeedyk et al., 2003; Bloyce & Frederickson, 2012; Evangelou et al., 2008) and the views of pupils with SEBD using person-centred review meetings at the Year 9 transition phase (Taylor-Brown, 2012), there appears to be little or no research looking at the views of pupils (and adults supporting them) at the Year 6/7 transition phase, adopting a multi-agency and child-centred framework and looking at their experiences of a SFPSM, which utilises elements of the PCP approach, solution-focused principles and visual annual reviews. Therefore, despite the views of young people being looked at in a range of settings they have never been a central component for those ‘at risk’ of exclusion working within a multi-agency and child-centred framework at the Year 6/7 transition phase. The study by Taylor-Brown (2012) looks at the views of pupils at the Year 9 transition phase identified with SEBD and their experiences of PCP meetings. Similarly, Evangelou et al. (2008) look at the views of pupils at the Year 6/7 transition phase and ways they can ensure that the transition process is a smooth one.

**Given the identified gaps in the literature this thesis will seek to explore the following research questions:**

**RQ1:** How is the SFPSM intervention process perceived by all participants involved?

**RQ2:** How do participants perceive SFPSMs could work successfully in the future?

**RQ3:** How does the Educational Psychologist perceive her role in developing the SFPSMs approach?
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction
Following on from the literature review above, one of the key aims of this research was to evaluate the ‘process’ of working within a multi-agency and child-centred framework from the perspectives of the pupils and professionals involved, with a specific focus on pupil views throughout the whole process, and at three key data collection points (pre, post and follow-up). These are described in further detail in section 3.5.2 below.

As the focus of the research is looking at the views of the participants, this will be influenced by the philosophical underpinning of the research, which will ultimately affect the research design and research methodology selected. The following chapter aims to discuss the following areas of relevance in relation to the methodology employed in the thesis: the philosophical underpinnings of the research; the research design; sampling and recruitment; data gathering methods; data analysis; reliability and validity; critique of research design and research method; ethical considerations.

The first section will consider the ontological, epistemological and axiological positions adopted for the current research and highlight their relevance and importance in relation to the design and data gathering methods used in the current research project.

3.2. Underpinning philosophical approach

3.2.1. Ontology.
Ontological position is essentially reflecting upon what we see as the nature and essence of the social world (Mason, 2009) and looks at assumptions which concern the very nature of social phenomena under investigation. It is looking at the nature of the reality under investigation. Therefore the key questions asked are: what the nature of reality is and where do we look for it? (Blaikie, 2008).

Blaikie (2008) goes on further to describe the following categories within the realm of ontological assumptions: shallow realist; conceptual realist; cautious realist; depth realist; idealist realist and subtle realist (p.14). When considering the categories that Blaikie (2008) has identified the one that most closely matches the current research is that of the ‘idealist realist’. The idealist realist’s ontological assumptions
are further broken down into two sub-categories: ‘atheistic idealists’ and ‘perspective idealists’. On the one hand, atheistic idealists “deny the existence or at least the relevance of an external world” (p.16) and on the other hand, perspective idealists “regard constructions of reality as just different ways of perceiving and making sense of an external world” (p.17). It is within this latter category that the current research fits best, as a key feature of this assumption is that social action involves a process giving meaning to social situations. Blaikie (2008) also emphasises that the idealist ontology is associated with ‘constructionism’. Essentially, ontological assumptions are embedded within the data gathering methods that are adopted and in the theoretical assumptions the researcher undertakes.

Within the current research the researcher views that knowledge and social phenomena are created through social interactions and through the social world within which individuals live and the meanings that individuals place on their social world through their interactions with it. Therefore the ontological position that was adopted was that of a social constructivist, which inherently believes that reality is the outcome of individuals making sense of their experiences with the physical world and with other individuals (Blaikie, 2008). The research recognised that the perceptions that would be uncovered would be those subjective opinions held by those individuals involved. As the research questions aimed to uncover the experiences and perceptions of individuals who were involved in the SPFSMs this meant that there would not be one reality of the meetings, but multiple realities of the meetings, which depended upon the subjective experiences of individuals who had been part of the meetings. Therefore, a key aspect of the study was to gain the views of the participants and their particular personal experience of the SFPSMs and data gathering methods were used in order to achieve this and capture the social realities and experiences that participants had with the SFPSMs.

3.2.2. Epistemology.

Epistemological position is generally described as the very “bases of knowledge, how it is acquired, formed and communicated to others” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 6) and is described literally as “your theory of knowledge” (Mason, 2009, p. 16) and provides a philosophical grounding for the kinds of knowledge that are available (Blaikie, 2007). It is essentially looking at the principles that an individual feels how social phenomena can be known and how knowledge can be demonstrated (Mason, 2009).
The epistemological position taken for this piece of research is one of a social constructivist stance, which has the underlying fundamental assumption that individuals will impose subjective meanings upon their experiences, which are often influenced by social and historical factors (Creswell, 2009). It also holds the assumption that individuals are seeking to understand the world within which they live and work (Creswell, 2009). Constructivism essentially means that reality is socially constructed and the task of the researcher is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge made by individuals (Robson, 2002) and look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings down (Creswell, 2009). Crotty (1998) identifies several assumptions when discussing constructivism: meanings are constructed by individuals as they interact with the world; individuals engage with and make sense of their world based on their social and historical perspectives; the generation of meaning arises from our social interaction with the world. This position lends itself to using an open-ended form of questioning, interviews and observations when trying to elicit the views of participants, which is appropriate for the current research.

Both of the above ontological and epistemological positions lend themselves to a qualitative design and qualitative data collection method. The goal of the research is to rely upon the participant’s understanding and view of the situation they are in, which is done through discussion, interaction, semi-structured questioning and a recognition of the researcher’s own background and how that will influence the research and interpretation of data yielded.

3.2.3. Axiology.

Axiology is essentially the way in which researcher values influence research and is often referred to as ‘ethics’ within the research paradigm. For the current research a social constructivist stance has been taken, which means that knowledge is seen as being formed through the social experiences and interactions that individuals have with their social world. The social constructivist stance also reflects the axiological position of the researcher, as the researcher is of the opinion that the social world that we live in, social interactions, social experiences and communities and cultures that we live in will have an impact upon the individual and the experiences they have with the social world. These experiences will then influence and shape an individual’s values, thoughts, relationships and behaviour. The values and beliefs that the researcher has, and how they have influenced the research are listed below:
• The researcher believes that all CYP should be given access and support to education, regardless of their home background, SEBD, SEN, ethnicity, and gender. Therefore, there is a strong belief and value in giving all children equal access to education and incorporate a sense of ‘inclusion’ for all;
• Early intervention is a key value that is held by the researcher and this is seen as a crucial aspect of providing support to CYP, particularly those with identified SEBD;
• The researcher holds a strong belief that CYP should not be 'labelled' negatively but all children should be given opportunities, support and a chance to change any negative perceptions held. School staff should develop their own opinion of CYP based on their personal experiences of the CYP and not be influenced by information or opinions that are held by other members of staff.
• The researcher feels that the school is a source of safety and security for CYP, particularly those identified as having SEBD, and with the right support, CYP can develop a positive sense of self and positive relationships. School staff should strive to ensure that all CYP experience school positively and develop a sense of belonging and security in school.

The list of values summarised above reflect the values that the researcher holds, particularly in relation to the current study and in general. It is inevitable that the values of the researcher will not only have influenced the ontological and epistemological position but also the research design and data collection methods that the research used. In addition to this, the researcher acknowledges that the values and beliefs held will have influenced the interactions that occurred between all the research participants. However, in order to account for this the researcher aimed to ensure that the reliability and validity of the interviews was consistent throughout the interviews held, which was done through using a semi-structured interview format to ensure consistency of approach.

3.3. Design of the study

3.3.1 Rationale for the design.

There are a huge range of methodological designs at the disposal of any researcher which can be retrieved from any of the following texts: Robson (2011); Creswell (2009); Bernard (2000) (and many more). The design chosen can be an amalgamation of personal preference, experience, epistemology, research
questions, practical issues and theoretical considerations. However, the design selected for this piece of research has essentially been derived from the researcher’s epistemological position and the research aims.

The overarching nature and aim of the research was to look at how those pupils, who were identified as ‘at risk’ of exclusion when they began secondary school, viewed the ‘process’ of the SFPSMs and to obtain the views of the adults involved with each pupil. As the goal was to try and gain an understanding into the views and ‘constructions’ of reality from the perspective of participants the researcher felt that the most appropriate way to ascertain in-depth views and rich data would be through the use of a case study design, whereby the sample size may be small but the type of information yielded would be in-depth and qualitative in nature. Another reason for using the case study approach was due to the scope of the thesis requirements and the time frame within which it needed to be submitted. If more time and resources were available perhaps a different design may have been adopted and these ideas are discussed in Chapter 5 below.

3.3.2 Case study design.

A case study design is used in many situations that can contribute to our knowledge of individuals, groups, organisations and social phenomena and the need to use case studies comes from the desire to understand complex phenomenon (Yin, 2009). A case study is a strategy for inquiry whereby a researcher explores a phenomenon in-depth and cases are bound by time and activity and data is collected over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2009). Robson (2011) provides guidance on how to carry out ‘rigorous’ (p. 136) case studies to overcome some of the negative connotations that were linked to case studies historically as being ‘soft options’ (p.137). He states that the following components are typical of a case study: selection of a single case (can include a small number of related cases); studying the case within its context; collection of data using a range of data collection methods. Yin (2009) describes three types of case studies: exploratory; descriptive; explanatory, and explains that case studies are the preferred method for ‘how’ and ‘why’ research questions. Although Yin (2009) is one of the main proponents of case study design, Robson (2002) describes a case study whereby the focus is on a ‘case’, which can be either an individual, setting or an organisation, and takes the context into account. Case studies have been described as exploring a phenomena in-depth and collecting information using a range of data collection procedures (Cohen, et al., 2007).
Yin (2009) identifies the following five components of a case study design that are of importance:

1. A study’s questions;
2. Its propositions, if any;
3. Its unit (s) of analysis;
4. The logic linking the data to the propositions;
5. The criteria for interpreting the findings. (Yin, 2009, p.27).

Linked in with the above five components Yin (2009) makes the point that the role of theory is important in design work and once the above five components have been addressed this will lead you to start thinking about a ‘preliminary theory’ (p. 35) linked in to your research area. He goes on to list a range of theories that could be developed: individual theories; group theories; organisational theories; societal theories.

As with all research designs there are certain ways in which to judge the quality of the design and this criterion can also be applied to case studies. Yin (2009) identifies four tests that can be conducted to judge the quality of the research design. These four tests are: construct validity; internal validity; external validity; reliability. Yin (2009) provides a useful table in which ‘tactics’ are identified for exploring the four tests aforementioned. These tests are especially important in the use of case study research as this research design is often critiqued for lacking in rigour and being subjective (See section 3.8 below for a ‘critique of the design and method’).

In his book, Yin (2009) describes and illustrates four specific designs for case studies which are:

1. Holistic (single unit of analysis) single-case design;
2. Holistic (single unit of analysis) multiple-case design;
3. Embedded (multiple units of analysis) single-case design;
4. Embedded (multiple units of analysis) multiple-case design.

He goes on to provide the rationale behind the use of each of the case study designs mentioned above and the strengths and weaknesses of each. For the scope of this thesis it is not deemed as necessary to go through the strengths and weaknesses of each of the case study designs but the rationale for the selected case study design will be discussed in detail below.
For the current piece of research an exploratory multiple (embedded) case study design was implemented based on Yin (2009) (Figure 3.1). A multiple case study design was adopted as it was felt that this would provide more robust evidence for the research questions posed, as there would be more data gathered from a range of participants. However, although the many pitfalls of the multiple (embedded) case study design were considered i.e. the extensive use of time and resources, the researcher felt that a multiple case study design would provide more compelling data than a single case study design and avoids putting ‘all your eggs in one basket’ (Yin, 2009, p. 61). Each ‘case’ was collected from the embedded unit of analysis (UoA) in each case (Yin, 2009). As can be seen in Figure 3.1 below each case has multiple UoA and these were explored. For the purposes of this research three cases were looked at in total, one from School A and two from School B. Figure 3.1 below gives an example of what each study looked like.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSEP view of the overall process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context:</strong> School A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case:</strong> Implementation of the process of using the SFPSM in School A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit of Analysis:</strong> Pupil views of the SFPSMs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit of Analysis:</strong> School views of the SFPSMs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit of Analysis:</strong> Other professional(s) view of the SFPSM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context:</strong> School B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case:</strong> Implementation of the process of using the SFPSM in School B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit of Analysis:</strong> Pupil views of the SFPSMs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit of Analysis:</strong> School views of the SFPSMs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit of Analysis:</strong> Other professional (s) view of the SFPSM.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Case study approach to illustrate the research.

3.4. Sampling and recruitment

As this piece of research was a pilot project in the two identified secondary schools the participants were recruited from the feeder primary schools that are linked to the secondary schools. Through liaison and discussion between the secondary school and their feeder primary schools children who were ‘at risk’ of exclusion were identified to take part in the research. Criteria employed to identify pupils to take part in the research was based upon ‘criteria’ developed by the multi-agency steering group (Appendix C), which was passed on to the feeder primary schools.
The feeder primary schools were then contacted by the SSEP overseeing and facilitating the project and by the researcher. The project and research was explained to the feeder primary schools and they were asked to identify pupils that they felt would be ‘at risk’ of exclusion based on the ‘at risk’ factors Venn diagram (see Appendix C), particularly at the Year 6/7 phase of transition, and those who would be suitable to take part in the research. No criterion was applied in terms of gender, ethnic origin or previous primary school. Purposive sampling (Robson, 2002) was used in order to select the pupils and the other three participants in each case were selected based upon their relationship with the selected pupil. All participants were then asked to take part in the research (Appendix D and Appendix E).

The ‘criteria’ for selection essentially comprised of the following:

- The age of the pupil (at Year 6 when identified to take part in the research);
- Vulnerability based on the ‘at risk’ selection criteria;
- To attend one of the two secondary schools participating in the research in September 2012;
- Relationship with the selected pupil i.e. parent, key adult/professional.

### 3.4.1. Number of participants.

As the aim of the research was to ascertain the views of pupils (and their link adults) experiencing the SFPSMs the individuals selected reflected a perspective rather than a specific population per se. The initial aim of the recruitment of participants was to identify two pupils from each secondary school, having four in total, however, due to a range of circumstances (which are discussed in the Discussion section below) the pupils eventually recruited to take part in the research resulted in one from School A and two from School B. In addition to this, the adults supporting the pupil (parent, school staff, and other professional) were also invited to take part in the research, as was the SSEP facilitating the project. Therefore in order to collect data to explore perspectives and experiences of the SFPSM a total of four participants were needed for **each** case study and these were the number of participants ‘expected’ to take part in the research, including the SSEP overseeing the project. Table 3.1 below illustrates the ‘expected’ number of participants for the research.

**Table 3.1**

Expected number of participants
Case 1:  
- A pupil;  
- A parent/guardian;  
- A member of school staff;  
- A key professional.

Case 2:  
- A pupil;  
- A parent/guardian;  
- A member of school staff;  
- A key professional.

Case 3:  
- A pupil;  
- A parent/guardian;  
- A member of school staff;  
- A key professional.

Case 4:  
- A pupil;  
- A parent/guardian;  
- A member of school staff;  
- A key professional.

Overall view of the project  
- SSEP

Although Table 3.1 above reflects the ‘expected’ number of participants that were anticipated to take part in the research in reality this did not happen. This was largely due to the unforeseen change in personal circumstances for the pupils identified for the research and a difficulty in engaging some of the parents due to a range of factors. Table 3.2 below reflects the ‘actual’ number of participants that were recruited for each case.

Table 3.2  
‘Actual’ number of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case 1:</th>
<th>Case 2:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Pupil A;  
- A member of school staff (who was also the key professional). | - Pupil B;  
- A member of school staff;  
- A key professional. |
Case 3:  
- Pupil C;  
- A member of school staff;  
- A key professional.

Case 4:  
- Pupil D*

Overall view of the project  
- SSEP

*Pupil D moved to another country over the summer of 2012 and has not yet attended secondary school and was therefore not able to continue to participate in the research. Although the pre and post intervention interviews took place with him they have not been included as part of the data set and analysis, as it does not provide a complete picture of his views and triangulation of perspectives did not take place as he was no longer part of the research.

3.4.2. Outline of participants.

Although many pupils were identified through the discussion with secondary schools and their feeder primary schools to take part in the research the table below outlines some background and contextual information about the four pupils who were eventually identified and selected to take part, including the adults supporting them.

Table 3.3
Background and contextual information about participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary School</th>
<th>Pupil A (Paul)</th>
<th>Pupil B (Joe)</th>
<th>Pupil C (Enrique)</th>
<th>Pupil D* (Mark)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of concern and risk factors identified.</td>
<td>Mainstream and Pupil Referral Unit (dual roll)</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Difficult family background.</td>
<td>- Unsettled family life.</td>
<td>- Temper/oppositional.</td>
<td>- Family have moved around.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Violent at school.</td>
<td>- Mother has mental health issues.</td>
<td>- Started at school in Year 4.</td>
<td>- Parental separation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Dual registered at the Pupil Referral Unit.</td>
<td>- His sister has a diagnosis of ASD has been in care.</td>
<td>- English as an Additional Language (EAL).</td>
<td>- Dad moved back to another country.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- On-going support from Social Care.</td>
<td>- New to UK in Year 4.</td>
<td>- Attendance issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 72% attendance, due to arrival very late in the mornings.</td>
<td>- Two older sisters in Europe.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and keeping friends.
-Challenges authority.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary school</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other agency involvement</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Although Pupil D was not included in the research and data analysis, information for him has been included here to provide the reader with an insight into the range of SEBD the CYP selected to take part in the research were experiencing.

### 3.4.3. Participant consent.

#### 3.4.3.1. Parent and pupil consent.

When considering obtaining written parent and pupil consent a range of methods were considered by the researcher: directly approaching the parents themselves and discussing the project face to face; sending out information about the project through the post and then following this up with a phone call; asking the school to directly approach parents about the project and explain what it is about and to take the consent. It was felt that the latter approach would be the best way to contact parents for the research, as they already had a relationship with the parents, knew them reasonably well and could explain what the research would be about and what it would entail. Figure 3.2. below illustrates the process of obtaining parental consent for the research through the primary schools.

![Figure 3.2. Process of obtaining parental consent.](image-url)
This consent was essential to obtain as the pupils identified for the research could not be contacted unless the parental consent had been given. Schools successfully managed to obtain parental consent from all parents, despite some parents being quite hard to engage. Through the preparation work that the schools had undertaken for the SFPSM the pupil consent forms had also been signed. However, when the researcher initially met with the pupils the research was explained again to the pupils and for those pupils who still had not given their consent for the research this was obtained.

3.4.3.2. Professionals consent.

Due to the initial steering group meetings that had taken place in the preliminary stages of the research most of the professionals who were asked to take part in the research were already fully aware of the research and what to expect. For those professionals supporting the pupils at secondary school, and who had not been aware of the research, they were contacted by the researcher, via email and telephone, and were informed about the research and their participation in the research. Information about the project was sent out to them via email or post and this was followed up by a further email or telephone call to ask their thoughts. Written consent was then obtained before the interviews took place. Written consent from the SSEP overseeing and facilitating the project was also obtained. Information and consent sheets sent to professionals and the SSEP can be seen in Appendix E

3.5. Data gathering methods

The type of data gathering method selected for a piece of research is largely related to the design of the study; the research questions posed and both these components should be reflected within the data gathering method (Mason, 2009; Creswell, 2009). It is also important to consider the epistemological stance that has been taken in the research as this will also guide the data gathering method (s) selected. To re-cap, the epistemological position taken in this research is a social constructivist one, within which the researcher is aiming to establish the meaning of events that occur from the perspective of participants (Creswell, 2009). Based upon the epistemological position taken and the research questions posed it is reasonable to suggest that the use of qualitative data gathering methods were undertaken in this research. As the design for this research was a case study design, although quantitative data can be collected, the research was aiming to collect qualitative data, which resulted in the use of qualitative data gathering
methods. This is also in line with the epistemological position of the research, as it is the ‘meanings’ that participants place upon their experience of the SFPSMs which are of importance and the quality and depth of information that they express through the interviews.

3.5.1. Semi-structured interviews.

Interviews are generally described as a research method whereby the researcher interacts with and engages in dialogue with participants in the research (Mason, 2009; Robson, 2011) and both construct narratives of the world (Miller & Glassner, 2011). Cohen et al. (2007) describe the interview as a “transaction that takes place between seeking information on the part of one and supplying information on the part of the other” (p. 351).

Coolican (2009) discusses five types of interviews which are outlined below:

1. Non-directive - whereby the psychologist does not give any direction to the interview but provides the interviewee with reflective support;
2. Informal – is directive in keeping the interviewee on the topic;
3. Semi-structured interview - this is an informal interview with a guide or ‘set’ of questions that the interviewer can use in the situation as needed;
4. Structured but open-ended – this can use a standardised procedure and pre-set questions are asked in the same order to all participants;
5. Fully structured – questions here are pre-set and ordered and they also have fixed answer items (pp. 155-157).

Semi-structured interviews are quite widely used and generally seen as a flexible approach to gathering data, particularly qualitative data (Robson, 2011). It is often a method that is employed when the researcher is carrying out a small scale research project when the interviewer is also the researcher (Robson, 2011), which applies in the case of the current thesis and research carried out.

Essentially in a semi-structured interview the researcher has a set of questions but the interview is ‘guided’ by this schedule rather than directed by it, as the researcher has the opportunity to pursue lines of inquiry as they arise during the interview. In this sense, the participant can be seen as an active agent in shaping the interview to some extent. The following sub-section explains the ‘rationale’ for why semi-structured interviews were selected as the data gathering method.
**3.5.1.1. Rationale for using the semi-structured interview.**

In order to gather ‘rich qualitative’ data the researcher felt that this could be achieved, through the use of semi-structured interviews. This methodology also supports the case study design (Creswell, 2009; Mason, 2009; Robson, 2011) and enables the researcher to explore areas of interest without restricting the knowledge that participants have (Yin, 2009). The rationale for using semi-structured interviews with participants is in order to allow the participants some flexibility during the interview to ensure that their viewpoints are heard and not restricted to a rigid interview schedule (Silverman, 1993). Semi-structured interviews are also a flexible tool to gather data which allows for greater depth of analysis (Cohen et al., 2007).

As the aim of the research was to ascertain the views of all the participants involved an interview schedule was developed by the researcher for all participants (pupils, professionals and the SSEP) and the data was gathered through the use of semi-structured interviews with all participants (Appendix F). All interviews were audio-recorded for transcription purposes. The data gathering methods are explicitly linked to the research questions and can be seen in the table below.

Table 3.4
Research question and data gathering method link

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Data gathering method</th>
<th>With Whom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: How are intervention plans perceived by all participants involved?</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>• Pupils;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School staff and;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Other professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: How do participants perceive this project could work successfully in the</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>• Pupils;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future?</td>
<td></td>
<td>• School staff and;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Other professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: How does the Educational Psychologist perceive her role in developing this</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>• Educational Psychologist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approach?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5.2. Order of the interviews and data collection points.

The pupils were interviewed at three points during the research: pre, post and a follow-up interview, which took place after the first half-term in school in Year 7. The reason for interviewing the pupils at three points was in order to gain their views before the SFPSM around their expectations of the meetings, and the information and explanations that they had been given. The post-interview stage was to look at their perceptions of what actually happened in the meetings and if their perceptions had remained the same or changed in any way (either positively or negatively). The follow-up interview with the pupils was in order to look at their perceptions and to see if their perceptions had changed in anyway, but also to identify things they felt worked well, what they valued and most importantly, their perception around secondary school and their subsequent ‘inclusion’ or ‘exclusion’ within secondary school. The school, professional (s) and SSEP involved were interviewed at the follow-up stage of pupil interviews and after the SFPSM took place in secondary school to obtain their retrospective (and in some cases current) views of the process. The reasoning behind interviewing the adult participants at the follow-up stage was due to the nature of the research being mainly concerned with the CYP in the research and ensuring that they had a ‘voice’ and felt that they were listened to. Therefore, it was the views of the CYP that the researcher was mostly interested in, as this would determine if the SFPSMs had made an impact upon the CYP in terms of their perceptions of being listened to and being involved in decisions about their lives. However, the adults involved in the research would be able to provide useful contextual information about the process of the SFPSMs that the CYP may not have access to. In order to get a clearer picture of the interviews that took place with each pupil table 3.5 below can be consulted.

Table 3.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews that took place for each pupil</th>
<th>Pupil A (Paul)</th>
<th>Pupil B (Joe)</th>
<th>Pupil C (Enrique)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-SFPSM interview</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview audio-recorded.</td>
<td>N/A due to absence.</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview, audio-recorded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.6. Data analysis

When thinking about analysing data an important initial consideration was to refer back to the epistemological position, research questions, design of the study and data gathering methods. As the design of the study is a case study design and is aiming to obtain a ‘rich’ picture from the perspective of the participant’s world view, the method of semi-structured interviews was used, which ultimately resulted in a ‘narrative’ and yielded qualitative data.

Robson (2011) describes a range of different approaches to qualitative analysis such as: quasi-statistical approaches; thematic coding approach; grounded theory approach (p. 467). Coolican (2009) outlines that the three major approaches taken to analyse qualitative data are: grounded theory; interpretive phenomenological analysis; discourse analysis. Coding has a central role in qualitative analysis (Robson, 2011).

Although content analysis was considered for analysing the data (Robson, 2002; Gillham, 2003; Coolican, 2009) it was felt that, for the purpose of this research, thematic analysis would be suitable in order to answer the research questions and identify repeated patterns of meaning across the data set and also provide greater depth of information (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.6.1. Thematic analysis.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis can be seen as a constructionist method that examines the way events and realities are the effect of a range of discourses (Robson, 2011). It is also a method “for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79) and is a method that can be used to ‘reflect reality’ and uncover the surface of
‘reality’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Robson (2011) describes thematic analysis as ‘thematic coding analysis’ whereas Braun and Clarke (2006) describe it as ‘thematic analysis’. All authors are describing the same method of analysis with some subtle differences. Table 3.6 below illustrates and compares the two approaches as described by Robson (2011) and Braun and Clarke (2006).

Table 3.6

Comparison of Robson’s (2011) and Braun and Clarke’s (2006) phases of thematic analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase</td>
<td>Description of the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Familiarising yourself with your data.</td>
<td>Transcribing data (if necessary), reading, re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Generating initial codes.</td>
<td>Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>themes.</td>
<td>codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reviewing themes.</td>
<td>Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Defining and naming themes.</td>
<td>On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Producing the report.</td>
<td>The final opportunity for analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selection of vivid, compelling extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

As can be seen from Table 3.6 above there are many similarities between thematic analysis as described by Robson (2011) and the model by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the case of the current research, the researcher opted to use the model described by Braun and Clarke (2006) due to the researcher being familiar with this model, having used it in previous research projects. It is also a widely used approach which might be familiar to other researchers.

Some of the initial considerations in the analysis were to think about some of the ‘choices’ that Braun and Clarke (2006) discuss in their paper when a researcher is thinking about using thematic analysis. They suggest that it is important to decide what your ‘data set’ is; what will count as your theme; inductive versus theoretical thematic analysis; semantic or latent themes and; epistemology (essentialist/realist versus constructionist thematic analysis). Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise that it is important that the theoretical framework (epistemological position) and the methods that are used match what the researcher is aiming to find out. The figure below links all the above considerations that were used in the research to the theoretical framework and method used in the research.
The main considerations for using the thematic analysis approach were the many advantages described for the approach, mainly ‘flexibility’ through the use of different types of qualitative data and applicability to a wide range of disciplines, as thematic analysis is not linked to any specific theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Robson, 2011). This approach is a method that can be used quickly and easily by researchers, even those that may have minimal experience of qualitative research (Robson, 2011). It also fits in well with the epistemological position taken in the research (social constructivist) whereby events, experiences and realities are examined in terms of the effects of a range of discourses that operate within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, despite the advantages of thematic analysis there are also many disadvantages and these are briefly reported here: the flexibility means that a broad range of things can be said about the data; it is limited to description rather than interpretation; it is a ‘generic’ approach and seen to have less strength as an analytic method compared to other methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Robson, 2011).

In order to overcome some of these disadvantages, and to produce a ‘good thematic analysis’, Braun and Clarke (2006) outline a 15 point checklist of criteria to determine a ‘good thematic analysis’ (Table 9). As the data was analysed through the application of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) model of thematic analysis their 15 point checklist (see table 3.7) was adhered to and used as the thematic analysis was conducted with the data set.
Table 3.7

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) 15 point checklist for good thematic analysis (p. 96)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcription</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for ‘accuracy’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of- rather than just paraphrased or described.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Analysis and data match each other- the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.</td>
<td>A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Written report

12. The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.

13. There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.

14. The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.

15. The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just ‘emerge’.

3.7. Reliability and Validity

Yin (2009) suggests that in order to demonstrate the strength and quality of the qualitative research design the following four criteria need to be applied:

- **Construct validity** - identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied. This can be achieved through the use of multiple sources of evidence and establishing a chain of evidence;

- **Internal validity** - (for explanatory or causal studies only and not for descriptive or exploratory studies): seeking to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships. This can be achieved through pattern matching and explanation building;

- **External validity** - defining the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalised. This can be achieved through replication logic in multiple-case studies;

- **Reliability** - demonstrating that the operations of a study- such as the data collection procedures- can be repeated, with the same results. This can be achieved through the use of a case study protocol and a case study database (Yin, 2009, pp.40-41).

In the present research it was difficult to fully address all of the reliability and validity measures described by Yin (2009), though the data collection was through semi-structured interviews with multiple informants. The researcher attempted to address reliability and validity as fully as possible within the limitations of the study to provide
a sound methodological underpinning for the data collection and analysis. The table below reflects the aspects of reliability and validity that were addressed through the present research.

**Table 3.8**

Aspects of reliability and validity addressed through the research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria:</th>
<th>Addressed via:</th>
<th>Research Phase:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construct Validity</td>
<td>- Purposive sampling method used.</td>
<td>Design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use of semi-structured interview approach with all participants.</td>
<td>Data collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Through checking the measurements and operationalization of constructs through supervision from University tutor and SSEP.</td>
<td>Design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- An observable chain of evidence can be seen through the thematic analysis process that was employed.</td>
<td>Data analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Validity</td>
<td>- Thematic analysis and the pattern matching that occurred here.</td>
<td>Data analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External validity</td>
<td>- Multiple case study design.</td>
<td>Design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>- Criteria used to identify participants in the research.</td>
<td>Sampling and recruitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Process of the SFPSM.</td>
<td>Methods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8. Critique of research design and research method

3.8.1. Critique of the research design.

Although case study research is a widely used form of empirical enquiry, looking at phenomena in-depth (Yin, 2009), it has been critiqued for a range of reasons. One of the main criticisms levelled against case studies is the lack of rigour, control and systematic organisation of data (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Zechmeister, 2003; Yin, 2009), which is often present in other research methods. This criticism could be overcome in the present research through the application of a mixed methods design, whereby qualitative and quantitative methods are used in order to address the research questions. Therefore, in addition to the case study design and use of semi-structured interviews, questionnaires could also have been administered to a broader group of participants involved, thus adding a quantitative element to the research and further validating the research. However, it was felt that the rich qualitative data that can be gathered through the use of a case study design outweighs what can be achieved from gathering quantitative data through the use of questionnaires to a wider pool of participants, particularly when the focus is on exploration of perceptions rather than more easily quantifiable data.

A further criticism lies in the inability to generalise from case study research, not being able to cross-reference results and the results being open to researcher bias (Nisbet & Watts, 1984). Reliability and validity are strong issues to consider when using this approach (Cohen et al., 2007) but Yin (2009) suggests using the four tests that are commonly used to establish the quality of empirical research to be applied to case studies too, which are: construct validity; internal validity; external validity; reliability (see Section 3.7. above). In the case of the current research the type of validity that is most applicable here is construct validity. This is related to ensuring that correct operational measures are being used to measure the concept that is to be studied and also if participants understand what is being asked of them. In this research the concept being measured is the participation and process of the SFPSM, and the operational measure used to do this is the semi-structured interview. In addition to this, other steps were undertaken to ensure the reliability and validity of the research and these are outlined in Table 3.8 above.
Despite the many drawbacks of the case study design many advantages are also cited in the literature. Case studies are seen as accessible to wider audiences; they are strong on reality; they catch unique features of the data and can incorporate a range of data gathering methods to provide evidence about a contemporary event (Cohen et al., 2007; Nisbet & Watt, 1984). But the defining feature of the case study approach is that it provides rich, in-depth, qualitative data (Yin, 2009).

3.8.2. Critique of the data gathering method.

The main data gathering method used was semi-structured interviews and these bring with them a whole host of advantages and disadvantages. One of the main advantages of using the semi-structured interview is that it allows the researcher to develop rapport with participants and enable the conversation to flow naturally. This structure is useful, particularly within the context of using an exploratory case study design, whereby new information can be sought through the fluid structure of the semi-structured interview (Cohen et al., 2007). This rapport will bring with it rich qualitative data, which is not achievable through other means of data gathering, such as observation and documentary evidence. Although observational methods have a number of advantages (it is direct, you can see people in their natural settings) (Robson, 2002) it was not seen as an appropriate means of data gathering as there was a need to keep the role of researcher and participant separate. Therefore, in order to keep the boundaries of roles intact it was felt that the semi-structured interview method would be the most appropriate.

The flexibility of semi-structured interview can be criticised and seen as a weakness (Yin, 2009), whereby the researcher may want to follow the flow of the conversation and not cover all the questions initially. This may also lead to the order of the questions being changed as the interview progresses and flows, which will impact upon the difficulty for the researcher to compare participants’ answers (Patton, 2002). This lack of standardisation can put the ‘reliability’ of the data gathered through interviews into question (Robson, 2011). However, Creswell (2009) points out that a key benefit of using interviews in general is that they allow the researcher to have some control over the questions asked.

In terms of using the semi-structured interview Cohen et al. (2007) point out a number of ethical issues that need to be considered such as: informed consent; confidentiality and; the consequences of the interviews. These ethical considerations become even more paramount when children are involved in
research, as is the case in the present research (see section 3.9 for Ethical Considerations).

A further issue around the interviewing of children leads on to the discussion around power dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee, as power and status is heavily implicated when an adult is interviewing a child (Eder & Fingerson, 2003). This may also influence the validity of what the children discuss in the interview as they may answer questions based on what they think they ‘should’ say rather than what they truly believe. However, as with all self-report measures there is also the issue of reliability and generalisability as they are often affected by ‘researcher effects’, whereby the skills and characteristics of the researcher can have either a positive or negative impact on participants and the quality and amount of information obtained (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 2003; Cohen et al., 2007; Coolican, 2004).

The time-consuming nature of interviews (Robson, 2011) can often be a deterrent for potential participants. There is also the preparation time (making arrangements; arranging time; permissions and so on) that can be time-consuming for the researcher too, not to mention the length of time transcriptions can take to complete (Robson, 2011). Although the time consuming nature of interviews can be a deterrent for participants it was even more of a deterrent for the parents identified and invited to take part in the research, already being from a hard to engage group.

In the present research the researcher struggled to engage parents despite the numerous attempts made at communication, through home visits, telephone calls and meetings arranged at school. The researcher acknowledged that this would be a hard to reach group of individuals due to their personal circumstances and situations, and this was carefully considered within the recruitment strategy the research adopted. The researcher attempted to approach the parents indirectly through the schools in order to take part in the research. As school was a place of ‘familiarity’ for these parents it was ‘assumed’ that the parents would be willing to take part in the research, instead of the researcher approaching parents as an unfamiliar adult. Although the parents gave consent for themselves and their children to take part in the research, it proved extremely difficult in actually managing to carry out a research interview with the parents, despite the many attempts of contacting them. It is difficult to provide reasons for why the parents did not engage despite appointments being made, parents being reminded and contacted. However, it is not appropriate or ethical to speculate ‘why’ parents did
not engage but to just accept that in ‘real’ world research these are the many obstacles that researchers face and have to overcome.

### 3.9. Ethical considerations

As is part of the protocol and procedure in the School of Education, University of Manchester, before the current research went ahead, a report was produced by the researcher to be sent to the Ethics Committee in order for them to read through the research proposal and to issue ethical approval. The Ethics Committee at the University of Manchester issued ethical approval on 13.06.12 (Appendix H).

The research was conducted in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Conduct issued by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2006). The four Ethical Principles outlined are: respect; competence, responsibility and integrity and these are expanded in the guidelines in a Statement of Values.

There are a range of ethical considerations that are outlined in the literature and Coolican (2009) and Robson (2011) discuss many ethical considerations but those most relevant to the current research are outlined below:

- Confidentiality and anonymity of participants;
- Informed consent;
- Using vulnerable groups;
- Researcher safety;
- Access to findings;
- Researcher involvement in the SFPSM.

The ethical issues that were most pertinent to the current research are discussed in detail below and the procedures that took place in order to achieve them are also discussed.

#### 3.9.1 Confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

This issue was addressed through keeping all signed consent forms in a locked filing cabinet that only the researcher had access to. Only the researcher listened to the audio tapes of the interviews and all quotes used were anonymised, so that they were not identifiable to any participant in any way. These issues were discussed with all participants before the interviews took place and audio-recording took place.

A key issue that is often prevalent in small scale studies, like the present study, is in ensuring that participants are not identifiable in any way. Therefore, the current
research has been fully anonymised in order to ensure that none of the participants or the schools were identifiable in any way.

3.9.2 Informed consent.

Informed consent was obtained from all the participants. Although the pupils taking part in the research had signed the consent forms, the researcher went through the information sheets with each pupil before the interviews took place in order to ensure they understood what was expected from them and for them to ask any questions about the research. The same procedure was applied with all the professionals who participated in the research. Unfortunately, it was not possible to carry out the same procedure with parents, as the researcher did not come into contact with any parents through the research, apart from telephone calls and one home visit, accompanying the SSEP. Although one home visit was carried out to meet with a parent and remind them about the SFPSM that would take place the following day, the consent form was not discussed as it was deemed as not being ethical due to the circumstances of the parent at that moment in time. Therefore the research interview did not take place. All participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw at any point during the research.

3.9.3 Using vulnerable groups.

The pupils were central to this research and can be classed as a vulnerable group, particularly when their personal circumstances were taken into consideration. Therefore, certain precautions were taken in order to account for these factors, especially at the point of providing informed consent. All parents of the pupils involved in the research were informed about the research, through school, and information and consent forms were then sent out to all the parents and pupils, to be read, signed, and returned to the school. The procedure used with the pupils to obtain informed consent is not dissimilar to the process described by Robson (2011). He suggests that a number of questions need to be addressed when research is carried out with children such as: have they been given all the information (what the research entails, right to withdraw and so on); it is necessary to seek permission from parents; even when parents give consent the pupils should also be asked for their informed consent and; written information given to children should be written in a format they can read and access.
3.9.4 Researcher safety.

Although most of the research interviews were held on school premises there were occasions that warranted home visits, in order to try to engage the hard to reach parents. On the occasion that a home visit was undertaken the University lone researcher policy was adhered to and a member of the EPS team also accompanied the researcher on the visit.

3.9.5 Access to findings.

Given the emphasis upon participant perspectives and participation in the project the findings of the research will be presented to the schools that took part in the project and other secondary school head teachers in a presentation in May, 2013. The research will also be presented to the EPS and LA, who commissioned the research in the first place. All participants will be sent a summary of the findings from the research. The researcher will consult with the schools involved regarding how best to feedback to pupils, as is appropriate.

3.9.6. Researcher involvement in the SFPSM.

A key consideration made by the researcher was around being present in the SFPSMs when they took place. It was felt that the most appropriate way to obtain data around participants perceptions of the SFPSM was to ‘step back’ from the SFPSM and maintain some distance between the meeting and participants linking or relating the SFPSM to the researcher. The reasoning behind this was two-fold: firstly, to minimise ‘researcher effects’ during the interviewing of participants when they were asked for their views about the SFPSM, as the researcher did not want to influence their views in any way through them viewing the researcher as an integral part of the SFPSM; secondly, for the researcher to achieve as much ‘objectivity’ for each participant and the things that were discussed in their SFPSM to ensure that this did not influence the researcher’s approach and attitude towards each participant.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter will present the results in the following way:

- An overview of the context of School A and case study one, which will include an initial brief summary of individuals interviewed from the case, case context including number of SFPSMs meetings and those who attended, and thematic analysis of the data set;
- An overview of the context of School B and case study two and three, which will include an initial brief summary of individuals interviewed from the case, case context including the number of SFPSMs and those who attended, and thematic analysis of the data set;
- Thematic analysis of the SSEP interview;
- An integration of all the thematic maps from across the case studies and the SSEP perspective.

4.2. Setting the scene- School A

4.2.1. School A.

School A is a community, co-educational, comprehensive day school which caters for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. Due to the demand for places pupil numbers were increased from September 2008 and there are currently 831 pupils on roll. The school website proposes that they aim for the highest possible standards of work and behaviour and that boys and girls of all levels of ability are extended towards the limits of their individual capabilities within a well-ordered, caring environment. Able pupils are given opportunities to prepare for further and higher education, whilst pupils with general or specific learning difficulties receive a balanced and relevant education. The school has forged links with local primary schools and in addition has a long tradition of catering for the needs of pupils from a wide area based on parental choice. In 2010 the school received ‘Outstanding’ from OfSTED for ‘Overall effectiveness’.

There is a diversity of minority ethnic groups in the school, although the overall percentage is slightly less than the national average, as is the proportion of students whose first language is not English. The proportion of students who are eligible for
free school meals is slightly below average. The proportion of students with learning
difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The school holds
specialist technology college status and has achieved the Sportsmark and Healthy
Schools awards.

4.3. Findings from Case Study One

4.3.1. Case context.

Enrique attended School A and had been identified to take part in the research due
to his temper and oppositional behaviour that he displayed in school. He was a
pupil who had come to the United Kingdom in Year 4 and was described as a pupil
with English as an Additional Language (EAL).

The individuals interviewed as part of the ‘case’ for Enrique were his ‘key worker’
(KW) (Mrs X) in school and the school Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
(Miss Y), who oversaw the SFPSMs and facilitated them. Enrique’s parents were
supportive of the meetings and his mother attended two of the meetings. Unfortunately
his parents were unable to attend the interview for the research. Due
to the time constraints for the submission of the research it was not possible to re-
arrange another meeting to obtain their views.

In terms of the SFPSMs that took place for Enrique, these took place once he had
started secondary school, although he had been contacted to take part in the
research during the summer term of Year 6. Unfortunately, due to the breakdown in
relationships between home and school over the summer term of Year 6 it was not
possible to timetable a meeting for Enrique before he started secondary school, and
therefore his first SFPSM took place in secondary school.

The table below illustrates the dates the SFPSMs took place and who attended
them:

Table 4.1

Dates of SFPSMs and those in attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Number</th>
<th>Date of SFPSM</th>
<th>In attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>October, 2012.</td>
<td>Enrique, Mrs X (KW), Miss Y (SENCo), SSEP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2. Thematic analysis.

Each interview was initially coded individually (i.e. Enrique’s pre/post and follow-up, Mrs X (KW) and Miss Y (SENCo) interview) and a thematic map produced for each one before the amalgamation of all of these thematic maps into one. As Enrique was interviewed at three interview points (pre, post and follow-up) all three interviews were thematically analysed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) process of thematic analysis (see Appendix I for the process of obtaining the themes), which led to initial coding of the data, and then on to themes and the thematic network/map that was produced. The same process of thematic analysis was used for the interview with the school KW and the SENCo. The themes were analysed individually (i.e. Enrique’s interviews, Mrs X’s, and Miss Y’s) and this highlighted themes from each of the interviews. Once this had been done the themes were further analysed to identify those themes that over-lapped across the entire data-set (i.e. those that were present in all sets of interviews) and those that were specific to a particular group (school staff) or person (pupil, school professional). Therefore, despite the amalgamation of themes from across the entire data set, those themes that were specific to each individual (s) have been highlighted within the thematic map as standalone themes. This resulted in the production of the final thematic map and themes that arose from it, which will be discussed in the section below.

4.3.2.1. Overall thematic analysis.

The overall thematic analysis revealed that there were ten key themes, three of which also had sub-themes. The thematic map below illustrates the themes that were derived from the entire data set and highlights themes that were common to both the pupil and the professionals interviewed but also those that were specific to each participant interviewed. Through the thematic analysis of the entire data set it was evident that there were links between the different themes that had been identified and these links can be seen in the thematic map below.
Figure 4.1. Thematic Map for Case Study One.

1. Information about the project
2. Positive impact on school life
   - Social
   - Academic
3. Positive about the meetings
4. Understanding and expectations about the meeting/project
   - Pupil
   - Staff
5. Solution-focused
6. Child-friendly
7. Positive Adult(s)
8. Positive school/parental communication, engagement and support
9. Supportive Factors
10. Barriers identified
    - Communication
    - Practical aspects
    - Appropriate referrals

Language: Themes identified by professionals only

Link between themes
As can be seen from Figure 4.1 above, the data set resulted in the generation of ten key themes, with three of the themes (2, 4, and 10) having sub-themes. Two of the themes (9 and 10) were themes that were specific to the professionals from school that were interviewed. All the other themes (1-8) were common across the entire data set. As the process of thematic analysis took place (particularly at Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the thematic analysis) it became apparent that many of the themes (and their coded data extracts) overlapped with some of the other themes. For example, some of the perceptions around ‘Understanding and expectations about the meeting/project’ were also directly linked to the ‘Solution-focused’ theme, as perceptions held about the meetings ultimately resulted in working towards a positive solution for the pupil.

To illustrate the essence of each theme and enhance the understanding of the theme, each theme will be presented individually with data extracts to illustrate.

**4.3.2.2 Theme 1- Information about the project.**

The first theme was derived from all participants interviewed and reflected their views around the information that they were given about the project, either from the primary school or the SSEP who facilitated the meetings. The table below illustrates participant’s thoughts around the information that they received and data extracts to support the theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Information about the project.</td>
<td>‘…they told me about it in primary school, because I had some upset like in primary school because people were being mean to me…” (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>’My head teacher and my, my umm form teacher, no like, no, my teacher’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mrs X started to talk to me in lessons and letter home to talk to my mum’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Mainly the information that was in the information pack that err, that Miss Y had</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2.3. Theme 2- Positive impact on school life.

This theme was derived from the perceptions of the pupil and school professionals interviewed, as all participants felt that there had been an improvement or a positive impact on the pupil’s school life. This theme is further refined into two sub-themes: social and academic. The reason for this is that the positive impact was seen to be in both Enrique’s social and academic life. Table 4.3 below illustrates this theme further with supporting data extracts.

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Positive impact on school life.</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>-’Basically, I’ve got friends that like, I talk to, so people don’t really like see me anymore like because I hang out with other people than them…’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-’Umm, like I used to hang out with just one person in Year 11, and now I just like sometimes talk to people in my year, first I used to hang out with people in different years’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-’He seems a lot happier in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

given me, umm, just read through you know, what was, what was going to happen, who, who was going to come into school and that, that was it really and you know obviously I’ve been in some of the sessions, you know, the sessions when you spoke to Enrique’. (Mrs X-KW)

-’There was a lot of information that was given to us beforehand…’. (Miss Y-SENCo)
school, and I think one of the things that I’ve noticed a lot, I mean the social skills group that he was part of worked particularly well for him…” (Miss Y- SENCo)

| Academic | - ‘I’ve got good grades and everything so, that’s good, I’m concentrating on my grades’. (Enrique) |

### 4.3.2.4. Theme 3- Positive attitude about the meeting (s).

This theme was generated across the entire data set, as all participants reflected positively on the SFPSMs that took place and felt positive about them in a range of ways. The table below illustrates this theme with data extracts to support.

Table 4.4

Theme 3 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3. Positive attitude about the meeting (s) | - ‘Everything’s been perfect really, nothing’s just been, it’s just the way that it’s done alright…” (Enrique).  
- ‘Nothing, it’s perfect, there’s nothing really; you’re doing a really good job’ (Enrique).  
- ‘…all the teachers like in the meetings taught me that you just like hang out with them and you do see who they are’. (Enrique)  
- ‘Yeah, err, I mean we do have like review meetings that I’ve got another two children that I’m a key worker for and you know, they are, they are, I think they’re very beneficial to the children so, yeah, definitely use them again’. (Mrs X- KW).  
- ‘Yeah, I mean we already use them anyway for the SEN children, but yeah it’d be
4.3.2.5. **Theme 4- Understanding and expectations about the meeting/project.**

This theme was seen across the entire data set and generally reflects participant’s expectations around the meetings and Enrique also demonstrated a sense of emotional understanding and self-reflection about the meetings. This theme is also linked to Theme 5 (Solution-focused), as some of the expectations from the meetings were around the development of, and working towards, a positive solution for the pupil. Table 4.5 below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to support.

**Table 4.5**

**Theme 4 and Data Extracts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4. Understanding and expectations about the meeting/project | Pupil     | - ‘Yeah, and I’ll solve my problems out’.  
- ‘Because they at one point like, they were asking me like why was, why are people bullying me and it was like really sad’.  
- ‘Umm, I’ve gone like some up downs and then I’ve climbed up again and then it’s like I went down again so, basically I’m it’s just in the middle’.  
- ‘Umm, I didn’t like, I don’t like, I much more like happy, so I’m not as stroppy as I used to be (laughs)’. |
|                                                 | Staff     | - ‘Err well I thought it was to |
4.3.2.6. Theme 5- Solution-focused.

This theme was generated through the data set as one in which participants viewed that the meetings would be a way forward in providing a ‘solution’ to some of the difficulties that Enrique was encountering within the school context. This theme also had a link to Theme 6 (Child-Friendly), as the solutions that were sought for Enrique were those that were meeting his needs and not the needs of anyone else. Table 4.6 below illustrates this theme with supporting data extracts.

Table 4.6
Theme 5 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Solution- Focused</td>
<td>‘Umm, that was about me (laughs), yeah and they can try to help me’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘…and it, it brought up issues that we could, that we could deal with within school…ummm…and that you know, we found out what we could do to help Enrique’. (Mrs X-KW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Umm, it, it brought up issues that, that we could deal with, in a sense that he, he mentioned things that were achievable that we could, as a school, help him with in his, you know, so we could, not adapt but so his, so his schooling was the best that he could, you know, get out of it’. (Mrs X-KW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2.7. Theme 6- Child-friendly.

This was quite an interesting theme and one which was evident through all participants. As the ultimate aim of the research was to look at pupil-centred meetings it was enlightening to find that this was a common theme across the data set, as all participants reiterated how important the pupil-centred nature of the meeting was for them. This theme is also closely linked to Theme 7 (Positive Adult[s]) and through the very nature of having a ‘positive adult’, especially from the perspective of Enrique, it meant that the meeting had a child-centred feel to it.

Table 4.7 below illustrates this theme with supporting data extracts.

Table 4.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extract to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Child-friendly</td>
<td>· ‘Like, what favourite lessons do you like, what’s your upset and like things that make you happy and everything’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· ‘We just talked about, me really (laughing)’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· ‘They [adults in the meeting] were very smiley and they were like very nice and they weren’t like, just like, saying oh, they weren’t saying anything bad about me they were only saying good things about me and everything’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· ‘…and it’s like kept it like silent and everything, so that’s really good as well so it’s like, they’re not telling anybody so’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>· ‘Err, I thought it was good umm, good listening to, like obviously what you was, you know the questions you were asking him,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
umm and it was interesting to hear what he was, you know what he was to hear his views on, on it and I thought you know, I thought it went well and it was, it was child-friendly’. (Mrs X-KW)

4.3.2.8. Theme 7- Positive adult (s).

This theme arose from the all participants involved in the research, and generally reflected the way in which the adults approached the SFPSMs. It also took into account the way the social interactions took place between adult to adult and adult to child, which were positive. This theme is also linked into Theme 8 (Positive school/parental communication, engagement and support) as those adults that were involved in the research were school staff and parents, and all were seen positively both by the pupil and school staff interviewed. Table 4.8 below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.8

Theme 7 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extract to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Positive adult (s).</td>
<td>‘They were very smiley and they were like very nice and they weren’t like, just like, saying oh, they weren’t saying anything bad about me they were only saying good things about me and everything’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘…and I think the main benefit for the child was the key worker, having somebody there as a point of contact who isn’t a teacher, who isn’t his form tutor, and he knows where they are and he can go for a chat with them’. (Miss Y-SENCo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.9. Theme 8- Positive school/parental communication, engagement and support.

This theme was generated from all the participants through the analysis, as all participants felt positively about the SFPSMs and the positive effect that they had upon the communication between school and parents. This theme also links in with theme 7, as these adults were seen in a positive light and this enhanced the
communication and engagement between home and school. There was a two-way relationship between theme 7 and 8, as positive school/parental communication would ultimately have an effect on ensuring that there were ‘positive adults’ available for Enrique, and vice versa. Table 4.9 below illustrates this theme.

**Table 4.9**

Theme 8 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Positive school/parental communication, engagement and support.</td>
<td>‘Mrs X started to talk to me in lessons and letters home to talk to my mum’. (Enrique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘…I mean we got a lot of input from you know mum, the communication within the meeting was very umm, we needed that’. (Mrs X-KW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘…umm and with this particular child that we did the review with the parent was very supportive and easy to engage…’ (Miss Y-SENCo)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3.2.10. Theme 9- Supportive factors.

This theme was generated through discussions with school staff involved in the SFPSMs and reflects their perspective on what they felt were factors that supported the SFPSMs. The ideas presented here are around personal interest and involvement in the SFPSMs by school staff and their prior involvement and training within pupil-centred meetings. Table 4.10 demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

**Table 4.10**

Theme 9 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Supportive Factors.</td>
<td>‘I did all the preparation work in the sense that I did all the flipcharts, umm, I spoke to his teachers, umm or emailed teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
regarding what their, you know, their opinions…’. (Mrs X- KW)

‘I thought it would be interesting and a good, a good way to see you know what, what was going to be achieved from it in the end’. (Mrs X-KW)

‘Err, I was, I was interested in it…’. (Mrs X-KW)

‘It sounded like something we would be interested in’. (Miss Y-SENCo)

‘It’s the child-centred process, which I think is wonderful anyway…’. (Miss Y-SENCo)

‘I thought it went very very well, got positive feedback from the parent and the child, err, key worker had obviously worked very very hard in planning, preparing but it, because everybody was part of the process, it was very positive, yeah’. (Miss Y-SENCo)

4.3.2.11. Theme 10- Barriers Identified.

This theme was one that was evident in the data set for school staff interviewed and is self-explanatory. The members of school staff interviewed identified a number of factors that they felt were barriers in the process of the SFPSMs. This theme is divided into three sub-themes, as the barriers that were discussed fit into one of the following sub-themes: Appropriate referrals; Communication; Practical Aspects. Although three sub-themes have been identified there is an obvious link between all three, as they feed into each other. For example, ‘Appropriate referrals’ will ultimately link into how information is communicated about pupils identified, which can link into the practical aspects of carrying out the SFPSMs i.e. the time factor. The table below demonstrates this theme, with the associated sub-themes, and provides data extracts to illustrate this theme.

Table 4.11

Theme 10 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Data Extract to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Data Extract to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate referrals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practical Aspects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

96
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. Barriers Identified</th>
<th>Appropriate Referrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘...it’s probably took about three meetings before any proper decisions were made, umm, and then a little bit longer before we decided on who, what pupils would be best to participate’. (Miss Y-SENCo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘...it was obviously beneficial for the young person and the, for the family in terms of support, but when I look at other children in the school they wouldn’t have been my priority...’. (Miss Y-SENCo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>‘I think it’s very difficult with primary schools because they’re all from a different viewpoint...’. (Miss Y-SENCo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘...well I mean because I didn’t know his background I don’t know whether I should’ve known more about what had gone on in the past’. (Miss Y-SENCo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Aspects</td>
<td>‘...logistics are always an issue, finding a date that parents can attend and the child’s not in P.E. halfway through, and things like that, that’s inevitable, umm and easily overcome...’. Miss Y-SENCo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘...The downside is the time element, it just takes so much time, and that’s my...’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4. Setting the scene- School B

School B is an 11-16 year old comprehensive college and caters for 848 pupils. In 2009, OfSTED described the school as attracting students from both the local area as well as from the inner city areas. There are more boys than girls. Around 38% of students are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Pakistani origin. Around a quarter of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who take free school meals is twice the national average. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly higher than average. A relatively high number of students join the school at other times than the start of Year 7. It has been a specialist arts college since 2004.

The school website states the following:

As a learning community, in association with parents and local partners, we will secure appropriate opportunities for each of us to maximise our abilities, enabling us all to realise our potential. We will, thereby, enrich our own lives and the life of the community.

4.5. Findings from Case Study Two

4.5.1 Case context.

Paul attended School B and had previously attended the Primary Pupil Referral Unit and had been known to show ‘violent’ behaviour. From the basic information that was received from the school it was evident that he also had a ‘difficult’ home background.

In terms of the individuals interviewed in relation to Paul, the school Transition Mentor (TM) was seen as the key person involved in his life and was also the person who facilitated and supported the SFPSMs in school with him, and was slight frustration, I now think that because that child wasn't necessarily the best person to go through this process...it is very very time consuming umm and that's, that's the main down side'.
(Miss Y- SENCo)
therefore interviewed in relation to him. Although his parents were supportive of the SFPSMs and had attended the meetings, it was quite difficult for the researcher to actually engage them in taking part in an interview, despite being contacted many times, and the researcher even waited for them after two SFPSMs. Therefore, due to time commitments for the research to be completed it was not possible to continue to engage the parents in a date for the interview, and neither was it considered ethical.

The table below illustrates the dates the SFPSMs took place and who attended them:

Table 4.12

Dates of SFPSMs and those in attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Number</th>
<th>Date of SFPSM</th>
<th>In attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>November, 2012.</td>
<td>Paul, Paul’s mother, TM, Teaching Assistant (TA) and SSEP.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.2. Thematic analysis.

The process of thematic analysis was the same as it was for Case Study One, whereby each interview was initially coded individually and a thematic map produced for each one before the amalgamation of all of these thematic maps into one. The themes that arose through the thematic analysis were shared by both Paul and the TM, however Theme 3 ([School] commitment of time) is the only theme that was generated through the analysis of data for the TM.
4.5.2.1. Overall thematic analysis.

The overall thematic analysis revealed that there were five key themes, three of which also had two sub-themes and these can be seen in the thematic map in Figure 4.2. below:

Figure 4.2. Thematic Map for Case Study Two.

Overall the data set for Paul and the Transition Mentor resulted in the generation of five key themes (1-5), with three of the themes (1, 4 and 5) having two sub-themes. The aforementioned themes and sub-themes are similar to some of the research
questions asked and can be seen as a direct derivation from those questions. However, in addition to the themes being generated through those particular questions asked, these themes were also prevalent throughout the data set. As the process of thematic analysis took place, it was evident that there was some overlap between the themes and many of the data extracts in the analysis reflect more than one theme. For example, some of the perceptions around the ‘Information/communication about the project/meeting’ are also linked in to the ‘Involvement of other adults in the meetings’ theme, as the information that was given about the project ultimately depended on those other adults who were also involved in the project.

In order to illustrate the essence of each theme and enhance the understanding of themes it is important to look at each theme and identify data extracts from where the themes were obtained.

4.5.2.2. **Theme 1- Information/communication about the project/meeting.**

This first theme represented aspects in which the project and information about the project and meeting were cascaded and communicated to individual participants. This resulted in two subsequent sub-themes and reflected perceptions that were either positive or negative about this theme. It was evident from the thematic analysis that the TM did not identify any negative aspects of the process in relation to the information given about the project. However, from the analysis it was apparent that Paul did not really have much of an understanding or an opinion around the SFPSMs during the interviews, particularly at the pre-intervention stage. In fact, the researcher had to explain what the SFPSMs were and what they would entail to Paul during the pre-intervention interview. However, once Paul had experienced a SFPSM his views changed, although he still struggled to fully articulate his views around his expectations of the meetings. Table 4.13 below illustrates this theme with examples of data extracts.

Table 4.13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme:</th>
<th>Sub-theme:</th>
<th>Data extracts to illustrate:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Information/communication about the project/meeting

**Positive Perceptions**
- ‘I received a letter outlining what it was about, umm, and then when I actually went into the primary school I saw how the project was administered and the process that they went through’. (TM).
- R- ‘So, what wasn’t good about it [meeting]?’ ‘Nothing’. (Paul)

**Negative Perceptions**
- Researcher- ‘(Any thoughts about what you think might happen?)’: ‘Not really’. (Paul)
- ‘She didn’t, all she said was, Mrs B, was that you were coming in to talk to me about high school’. (Paul)
- Researcher- what do you think was going to happen?’ ‘Don’t know’. (Paul)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.5.2.3. Theme 2- Pupil-centredness.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

This theme arose from the data from the perspective of Paul and the TM and essentially reflected the importance given to the ‘person-centred’ nature of the SFPSMs. From the analysis it became apparent that Paul was positive about the fact that the meetings were about him, particularly positive things about him. The TM also emphasised through her interview the value she placed upon the pupil and how important it was to ensure that the meetings were about the pupil and that they were central to this. Table 4.14 below illustrates this theme with examples of data extracts.

Table 4.14

Theme 2 and Data Extracts
### Theme 2. Pupil-Centredness.

- ‘I thought it was just to (pause) help me in my problems I think’. (Paul)
- ‘Everyone writ a load of stuff, umm, and there was only a few what people think umm, what could change and only little people…only little, like four sentences was on that and the good ones there was a lot of them, other ones’. (Paul)
- ‘Just all the things what the, what my step-dad and me mum and Mrs B writ on the admire thing’. (Paul)
- ‘They asked for information from adults but it was really from you know, what was going to be good or what was going to be difficult for the child. Err, so I liked the perspective of it’. (TM)
- ‘…and it was centred around the child but then there was opportunities for the child to voice any concerns or anybody who actually knew that child was able to voice any concerns’. (TM)
- ‘…you’re getting people that are concerned and interested and care about the child to meet together to ensure the best outcomes on transition’. (TM)

### 4.5.2.4. Theme 3- (School) Commitment of time.

This theme really reflected the perspective of the TM around the practical aspects of the process of the meetings, particularly in relation to school professionals and the range of pressures they have placed on their time, which will have an impact on the quality of work done for the meetings with the pupil. This was a key ‘barrier’ that the TM identified in the application and administration of the SFPSMs and she felt strongly about this issue as a need to be addressed in order to wholeheartedly implement SFPSMs. Table 4.15 below illustrates this theme with examples of data extracts.
Table 4.15

Theme 3 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3. (School) Commitment of time. | - ‘…and it’s probably gonna always be a difficulty within education because of the nature of people’s roles and the extent to which they are committed in various other ways’. (TM)  
- ‘…time’s always you know, greatly limited within school and people are often rushing to complete tasks and I think that err, it’s hard for them to commit the time’. (TM)  
- ‘I would like, I would like to use the meetings as part of umm, the whole school system. Umm, however, I would need the school to be committed you know’. (TM) |

### 4.5.2.5. Theme 4- Involvement of [other] adults in the meetings.

This theme arose from both Paul and the TM and has two sub-themes: positive perceptions and negative perceptions, which reflect how the involvement of others in the meetings were perceived by both Paul and the TM. Essentially there were mixed feelings around the involvement of other adults from both Paul and the TM. On the one hand Paul wanted more individuals to attend his SFPSM (i.e. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, his step-dad) and was positive about the attendance of adults in his meetings and on the other hand, he was disappointed when individual’s did not turn up to his meetings (i.e. his step-dad). For the TM she felt that it was essential that other adults and professionals become involved in the SFPSMs but was also aware that not all professionals would be willing or positive about the PCP nature of the SFPSM, due to their lack of understanding about them. Table 4.16 illustrates this theme with examples of data extracts.

Table 4.16

Theme 4 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| 4. Involvement of [other] adults in the meetings | **Positive Perceptions**<br>`-I was really interested to take part…I already had a role in school helping children with transition from Year 6 to Year 7…'. (TM)`<br>`-I do feel I am a facilitator in my role because I believe in the process of the person-centred working’. (TM)`<br>`-‘Well next time I posed to be getting err my CAMHS umm and my CAMHS coming and err hopefully my step-dad can come to this one’. (Paul)`<br>`-‘I think the facilitators are the enthusiasm from the Educational Psychologist’. (TM)`<br>`-‘…you’re getting people that are concerned and interested and care about the child to meet together to ensure the best outcomes on transition’. (TM)` | **Negative Perceptions**<br>`-I think people err, sometimes people aren’t always engaged so the adults who perhaps were invited haven’t always been able to come and I think that can be a difficulty’. (TM)`<br>`-‘…but I do see the barriers to be may be a mind-set that doesn’t understand or appreciate the importance of person-centred planning’. (TM)`<br>`-‘…you know we do have parents who really struggle to
4.5.2.6. Theme 5- Future directions.

The final theme was directly derived from one of the questions that were asked of all participants around ways that things could be improved in the future. The analysis identified areas and ways in which both Paul and the TM felt that they would like future meetings to be held. Although the views for Paul were generally around himself and what he would personally like to see happen in future meetings, the views of the TM reflected how she felt the meetings could be improved in the future, particularly in relation to the school system and commitment. Table 4.17 below illustrates this theme.

Table 4.17

Theme 5 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Future Directions</td>
<td>For Pupil</td>
<td>‘Err probably more people…so I know what other people think about me and I think I should change, instead of just a couple of people’. (Paul)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For School</td>
<td>‘Umm I think it would be good if schools could commit to this sort of a process errr, but committing time as well you know’. (TM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘...umm and may be to start schools off may be with this umm, teaching or training on person-centred approaches to children’s educations and some of the issues that come up...’. (TM)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘...I would like to use these’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6. Findings from Case Study Three

4.6.1. Case context.

Joe attended School B and had been identified to take part in the project from his primary school due to his complex and difficult home life and the impact that this was having on his school life. One of the main reasons that Joe was identified as being vulnerable at the Year 6/7 transition phase was because there was involvement by Social Care and his mother had mental health issues. In addition to this he had a sister who had a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder who was in Care and his attendance was at 72%. He also found it difficult to make and keep friends and he challenged authority. It was also known that it was difficult to contact Joe’s mother and engage her.

In terms of the individuals interviewed in relation to Joe, his Social Worker (SW) and his Key Worker (KW) at school were both interviewed. Unfortunately it was not possible to interview Joe’s mother, despite many attempts at contact and engagement, including a home-visit. However, in fairness, Joe’s mother had more important issues on-going in her life at the time of the research interviews and it was not felt to be ethical to persistently chase her up to carry out an interview when she had other pressing matters to deal with in her life. However, due to the time limits of the current research, it was also not possible to wait until things had settled down for her in order to interview her, therefore her views were unable to be sought on this occasion.

The table below illustrates the dates the SFPSMs took place and who attended them:

Table 4.18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Number</th>
<th>Date of SFPSM</th>
<th>In attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>July, 2012.</td>
<td>Joe, Joe’s mother, school attendance officer, KW,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>October, 2012.</td>
<td>Joe, Joe’s mother, Joe’s friend, TM, KW, a Teaching Assistant, school attendance officer, two social workers, and two outreach support workers, SSEP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>October, 2012.</td>
<td>Joe’s mother, Joe’s friend, TM, KW, a Teaching Assistant, school attendance officer, two social workers, and two outreach support workers, SSEP.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As both Joe and Paul attended the same secondary school the Transition Mentor was involved SFPSMs for both of these pupils.*

### 4.6.2. Thematic analysis.

The process of thematic analysis was the same as it was for Case Study One and Two. The themes were analysed individually (i.e. Joe’s, KW, SW) and this highlighted themes from each of the interviews. Once this had been done the themes were further analysed to identify those themes that over-lapped across the entire data-set (i.e. those that were present in all sets of interviews) and those that were specific to a particular group (school staff) or person (pupil, professional). This resulted in the production of the final thematic map and themes that arose from it, which will be discussed in the section below.

#### 4.6.2.1. Overall thematic analysis.

Once the entire data set had been analysed and looked at for themes, this resulted in the production of themes that were evident either across the entire data set or to specific individuals i.e. pupil, professional. The thematic analysis resulted in the generation of seven themes and one theme with three sub-themes. There was not much link between the themes in the case of Joe, as the themes were quite distinct.
on their own. However, there was some link between Theme 3 (Positive impact on school life) and Theme 4 (Positive view about the meeting), which will be discussed in the following sub-section. The thematic map below illustrates the themes that were derived from the entire data set and highlights themes that were common to both the pupil and the professionals interviewed but also those that were specific to each participant interviewed.

Figure 4.3. Thematic Map for Case Study Three
4.6.2.2. Theme 1- Practical aspects of the meeting/project.

This theme was evident across the entire data set and from all the participants involved in the research interviews. It generally reflects perceptions and thoughts around the meetings and the overall project. There were a range of opinions around the project and this resulted in the generation of three subsequent sub-themes which are: Positive; Negative and; Areas for Change. As can be seen from the sub-themes, some opinions were positive whereas others were negative and areas for change were also suggested. However, it must be noted that the areas for change were generally suggested by the pupil interviewed and although this has been included as a sub-theme some of the suggestions made were not practical or realistic. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.19

Theme 1 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Practical aspects of the meeting/project.</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>-‘Listen and like….and write on the wall how I could change my attitude and stuff’. (Joe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-‘A [EP] explained it quite fully to me and I thought it was quite a good idea because I did recognise that the child was quite vulnerable in his, in his needs…’; (SW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>-[When asked what helped in the meetings] ‘Nothing’. (Joe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-‘It was a bit boring’ (Joe).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-‘Like what is the point? I don’t understand how, why you had to write all the things that you already know’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.6.2.3. Theme 2- Familiarity of high school staff.

This theme was generated through the analysis of the pupil interview and was a theme that was prominent and important for the pupil. Joe felt that through the use of the SFPSMs he was able to get to know who the staff were in the secondary school and this gave him a sense of comfort and security, as he knew that there would be a familiar adult there when he got to secondary school. The table below illustrates this theme and provides data extracts to illustrate the theme further.
Table 4.20

Theme 2 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extract to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Familiarity of high school staff.</td>
<td>-‘So now I know some other people from School B’. (Joe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-‘You know the staff a bit’. (Joe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-‘Just that I know the teachers a tiny bit that’s it’. (Joe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.2.4. Theme 3- Positive impact on school life.

This theme arose from the pupil, as he expressed positive views about his transition to secondary school and the way things were going for him so far. He was positive about secondary school and preferred it to primary school. It was an overall positive experience for him as he felt that coming to secondary school had made a positive impact on his social life at school and he also enjoyed the lessons in school too. There is also some reflection of the positive impact on the pupil from the perspective of the Social Worker interviewed. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.21

Theme 3 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Positive impact on school life.</td>
<td>-[When asked how things have been since the meeting in primary school] ‘Good…I’ve met lots of people…I’ve made new friends’. (Joe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-‘I like it better than primary…High school’s a lot better…because you can do more stuff like…you can build woodworks, you can do art and design and…yeah and textiles and things and stuff, instead of just doing maths and English and sometimes science and P.E.’. (Joe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                    | -‘Umm, his sort of umm, confidence and his
113

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extract to Illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Positive view about the meeting</td>
<td>-'Again on the, on the first couple it was positive and I thought it was a little bit you know, I thought we got a lot out of it...'. (SW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-'Only that I think, as I say, that it's a positive thing and I think you know...'. (SW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-'I found it quite interesting and good...'. (SW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.2.6. Theme 5- (Lack of) pupil involvement.

As the fundamental component of the SFPSMs was the pupil-centred nature of the meetings it was essential for the pupil to be part of the meetings and the process. However, due to Joe’s poor attendance in school he had missed out on being part of two of the meetings that had taken place. Therefore, this theme arose from the view of the professionals that were interviewed, as they felt that it was essential for the pupil to be a part of and engaged in the SFPSMs and the fact that he had been absent in the meetings meant that he did not benefit from the meetings and the pupil-centred nature of the meetings could not be fully achieved. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.
Table 4.23

Theme 5 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to Illustrate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. (Lack of) Pupil Involvement.</td>
<td>&quot;…but it’s difficult to say cos he’s not been present, his his attendance is so poor. I mean initially like I think that the one we had last time was set up and it was really you know, it was really welcoming environment you know, there was drinks and there was food for him and he was allowed to bring a friend and things like that and he never turned up’. (KW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;…but we’ve not seen a result and purely that’s not down to the actual structure, it’s not down to the facilitator, it’s not down to, it’s down to the pure fact that we’ve not had that pupil’. (KW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;…cos it’s basically for him, it’s not just a professional's meeting it’s for him, and if he’s not there’. (KW)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.2.7. **Theme 6 - Positive focus for pupil.**

This theme was generated through the interviews carried out with the professionals and is essentially about the ‘positive’ or ‘strengths-based’ focus of the meetings for Joe. It reflects the importance of looking at the positives for Joe and to use these positives to support him in his journey through secondary school. The table below demonstrates this with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.24

Theme 6 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to Illustrate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Positive focus for Pupil.</td>
<td>&quot;…I thought it was quite positive that asking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
umm, you know, the things about what was positive about the young person, about his likes and his dislikes, you know rather than just concentrating on negative things which obviously very easy to do umm, and looking at the positives that we liked about him…’. (SW)

‘…Yeah, if there was anything we could do on a practical level, to address some of the difficulties then that was what I was, what I would be doing you know’. (SW)

‘…and it’s good to look at some of the things, well actually he’s very good at this and he’s good at that, and we miss that sometimes you know’. (SW)

‘…err obviously you know I mean it’s good that obviously he [Joe] also gets his input as well so that…’’. (KW)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to Illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Multi-agency Involvement.</td>
<td>‘I think the one good thing that came out of it was you know cos there was different agencies involved…’. (KW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘…people tend to collectively have the same</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6.2.8. Theme 7- Multi-agency involvement.

This theme arose from the interviews carried out with the professionals and the positive perspective they held around having multi-agency involvement in the SFPSMs. The perspectives reflected the positive views around having individuals from different agencies and how this develops a holistic approach in addressing and supporting Joe. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.25

Theme 7 and Data Extracts
sort of thoughts and things, which is good, especially when you've got different agencies involved and then you can all work, piece some bit of that information that you've got different agencies working say on a specific target if you will'. (KW)

-'Umm, I think it's good that cos we had like a few different agencies involved in it I think it's good that people get their ideas together and it's nice to see that people can work, you can work together…’. (KW)

4.7. Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist (SSEP) perspective

4.7.1. Background information.

To provide some brief background information about the SSEP, she is the Specialist Senior EP for emotional health and well-being, and therefore has a particular interest within the area of SEBD. One of her main responsibilities is to work quite closely with the Pupil Referral Units (both primary and secondary) and to support the schools in their needs and areas of training. She has been trained in the use of PCP approaches and is therefore a keen advocate to take this approach further and develop it.

In terms of the research, the SSEP was the key person in taking this piece of research forward and was the main facilitator of the research and the PCP approach. The research was a combination of a personal interest in the areas of SEBD and PCP approaches, but also from a local authority perspective to look at the reduction of exclusions, and early intervention to prevent exclusions. Although the focus of the project changed throughout the course of the research, the initial aim was to look at how to reduce exclusions, this focus shifted slightly to include supporting pupils with SEBD who may be vulnerable at the Year 6/7 transition stage through the use of SFPSMs. The SSEP began the project with an aim to facilitate multi-agency involvement and to use the SFPSMs as a format to support multi-agency working and also to support the pupil. Therefore, one of the initial aims of the project was to facilitate multi-agency work but as the project developed this was another area that lost momentum and importance due to a range of factors, which are discussed in Chapter 5.
4.7.2. Thematic analysis.

The process of thematic analysis was the same as it was for the previous case studies. This resulted in the production of the final thematic map and themes that arose from it, which will be discussed in the section below.

4.7.3. Overall thematic analysis.

The thematic analysis revealed six main themes, with one theme having two sub-themes. There were also some links between Theme 1 (School attitude towards SFPSMs) and Theme 2 (School Choice [lack of]). The link that was evident between these two themes was in relation to the way in which the school had participated in the research project and also the personal experiences of and information around the PCP approach. The thematic map below illustrates the themes that have been generated through the thematic analysis.

Figure 4.4. Thematic Map for SSEP perspective.
4.7.3.1. Theme 1- School attitude towards SFPSMs.

This theme was generated through the viewpoint of the way in which the school approached the SFPSMs. It was evident that the school either had a positive attitude toward the SFPSM or a negative one, and this was largely dependent on any of the following reasons: personal interest; personal involvement; training in PCP; school ethos; lack of understanding or knowledge about the approach. This theme is divided into two sub-themes around the attitude that was shown by the schools and these sub-themes are either positive or negative. This theme also has a link with Theme 2 (School choice [lack of]) below and reflects how the fact that having a choice in being part of a project can influence your attitude towards a project either positively or negatively. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.26

Theme 1 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School attitude towards SFPSMs.</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>-‘Umm, one school that volunteered to take part already used the approach but in, with quite a restricted err, group of children…the SENCo liked the idea of extending it and was already familiar with the approach…so she was keen to come on board’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-‘Well one school, as I said already, used the approach for its annual reviews….they did with relative ease and successfully and they also interestingly umm, have also used the approach with children whose situations are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
more….more complex...so they planned in advance to have that meeting in a person-centred way and did and reported that they felt that it had been effective and they were very pleased with having held the meeting in that way and are considering going to err, to do other PEPs in that way’.

'...well one member of staff in particular whose role it was to support umm, year 7 youngsters as they transitioned, really seemed to value the model and was very supportive and really took the main, umm, the main amount of work in helping to set it up and helping to ensure the meetings happened in school and in preparing the pupils for those meetings...’.

Negative

'And the other main school that’s been involved umm, were umm, more kind of, they were more volunteered (laughs), I think it was suggested to them that it might be a good idea to take part and was a new approach to them, and possibly one which, umm fitted in less with some aspects of the ethos of the school'.
4.7.3.2. Theme 2 - School choice (lack of).

This theme was generated through the ‘choice’ that the schools had in taking part in the project. This is not to mean that the schools were coerced in any way to participate but rather one of the schools felt somewhat ‘volunteered’ to take part, as it was felt that they would benefit from being part of the project. However, this ‘choice’ (or lack of choice) in being part in the project will ultimately have influenced the attitudes (Theme 1) of some of the members of staff in terms of their involvement in the project. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.27
Theme 2 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to illustrate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2. School Choice [lack of]. | ‘…I think it was suggested to them that it might be a good idea to take part and was a new approach to them, and possibly one which umm, fitted in less with some aspects of the ethos of school’.
|                             | ‘…because it was low down on his list of priorities presumably related to the fact that he had been volunteered for participation |
4.7.3.3. Theme 3- Pupil-centred.

This theme was reflected throughout the data set and reflects the importance of having a pupil-centred focus to the SFPSMs. It was apparent that ensuring the pupil had a voice was important to the SSEP, as was having a meeting that was focused around the pupil. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.28

Theme 3 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to Illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Pupil-centred.</td>
<td>- 'So it seemed like it might a useful vehicle in order to, for the youngsters themselves to feel more listened to but also that the whole approach might facilitate communication between the key players'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- '...the focus became much more on the voice of the youngsters rather than the voice of all participants'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- '...because the person-centred meeting you start with a. what we like and admire about the person so it's got that umm, positive approach....'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- '...for two of the youngsters involved they have gained from the project in terms of being able to express themselves and express their needs in, in the meetings, which I don’t think they would've otherwise been able to do....'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.7.3.4. Theme 4- Solution-focused approach.

This theme arose throughout the data set and was one that was explicit within the data. The SSEP felt quite strongly that having a solution-focused element to the
SFPSMs was important for the pupils in supporting to meet their needs within the school environment. However, although she reflected that having a solution-focused element is very important for the pupils she also made a note of when using a solution-focused approach may not always be appropriate to use with a pupil. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.29
Theme 4 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to Illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Solution-Focused Approach.</td>
<td>‘…I started adapting the format and I also thought it would be worthwhile having a more kind of solution-focused umm, a more solution-focused approach within the meetings as well’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘…I thought it was likely to be a useful approach to get err, useful actions, useful things to happen next’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Yeah, so within the pupil-centred format I adapted the way some of the questions were posed to have a more solution-focused format…’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                            | ‘…so the solution-focused approach to try and focus on the more positive aspects in order to try and bring some different perspectives to start building some you know different kinds of stories…’.

4.7.3.5. Theme 5- Enhancement of communication and participation.

This theme arose throughout the data set as the SSEP highlighted and reinforced the importance of active 'participation' from participants, particularly from parents and pupils. She emphasised that a key aspect of the SFPSMs was to encourage participation between the pupils, their families and the school. It was also felt that the SFPSMs were a platform upon which good communication could be established
between participants, regardless of roles and responsibilities. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.

Table 4.30

Theme 5 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to Illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5. Enhancement of communication and participation.                  | ‘...and the focus of the project evolved because I think I started out with more of a focus on using person-centred type reviews as a vehicle for communication, for easier multi-disciplinary working and easier communication…’.
|                                                                      | ‘Ok, the person-centred because it umm, it allows umm, it encourages more active, positive participation which I thought was important for this group…’.
|                                                                      | ‘...I think it was umm, I think it was appropriate, I think it was flexible in terms of meeting the needs of pupils and parents because the main aim of using the model with regard to pupils and parents was to allow for their more active participation and I think it did work well for that’.

4.7.3.6. Theme 6- Future training.

This theme was generated through the SSEPs reflections on what she would do differently next time and also areas that she felt needed further work and support for future projects. The main theme that arose from this was around the development of future training for members of staff who might be involved in any future projects. In addition to this, the SSEP also identified that there were certain training needs that members of school staff had, which she was unable to address either through lack of access to school staff and their lack of engagement on occasions. The table below demonstrates this theme with data extracts to illustrate.
Table 4.31

Theme 6 and Data Extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Data Extracts to Illustrate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Future Training.</td>
<td>- ‘In the other school umm, ummm, those staff whom I was able to access I was able to have a training session with and I had an hours session to go through umm, the format and rationale of the model and how best to prepare pupils to participate and that hour seemed to be sufficient for that person’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ‘I was aware that they had training needs because they didn’t seem to understand but I wasn’t able to, I offered them training but wasn’t able to engage them in it’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ‘Umm, I think I would look to have umm, either some school or some you know selected appropriate members of staff umm, involved in kind of an information sharing session’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ‘Umm I think having done all that if schools then did want to take part I’d give them a bit more training…’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.8. Themes from across the case studies and the SSEP perspective.

Following on from the thematic analysis that has been completed individually for each case study and the SSEP perspective, the following section will focus on the development of the themes that have been generated from all the interview data and present them as a collection of themes resulting in the amalgamation of the themes into one complete thematic map. Although the SSEP presented a meta-perspective of the process, the themes generated were similar to those generated as a whole and across the entire data set (Appendix J) and are therefore presented as one complete thematic map (Figure 4.5.). This is an amalgamation of all the themes that have been identified across the entire data set and case studies, incorporating themes that overlap or are similar together into one overarching theme.
and then producing a thematic map that represents the themes from the entire data set (Figure 4.5).
Figure 4.5. Overall Thematic Map with Key themes and Sub themes.
As can be seen by Figure 4.5. above, there were a range of ‘key’ themes and ‘sub’ themes. The way in which the key themes and sub-themes were developed was through the use of ranking each of the themes across the case studies and for those themes that over-lapped or were similar they were then grouped together. These themes were then ranked according to the number of times they were present in the case studies (i.e. 1, 2, 3 and 4) and those themes that were present across at least two of the case studies were ranked as being ‘key’ themes, whereas those themes that were unable to be grouped or only appeared in one case study were classed as ‘sub’ themes.

Figure 4.5. illustrates the 8 key themes that were identified and the 8 sub-themes that were identified. There are some links ‘within’ the key themes and sub-themes and also some links ‘across’ the key themes and sub-themes. Through the development of the thematic map it was evident that some of the themes were closely linked with each other, as these are highlighted in Figure 4.5. above. For example, key theme ‘Future Directions’ was closely linked to sub-themes ‘Familiarity of secondary school’, ‘(School) commitment of time’, ‘Barriers identified’ and ‘Practical aspects’. Therefore, although there was an over-arching theme about how the SFPSMs could be improved or ‘changed’ in the future, this was also closely related to the way views were expressed around the more practical elements of the SFPSM and some of the potential barriers that had been uncovered, which ultimately links in to the ‘future directions’ of the SFPSMs.

Figure 4.5 illustrates how the key themes and sub-themes are linked, but also demonstrates the link between the key themes. For example, one of the key themes identified was the ‘Solution-focused’ theme, which represented the perceptions held about the SFPSMs by participants. This is also linked into the way in which the SFPSMs were viewed, which was also affected by the ‘choice’ the schools had, information they received and their understanding about the SFPSMs. Key theme ‘Information about the project’ and sub-theme ‘Understanding and expectations about the meeting/project’ reflect the information that was given to participants about the project and are linked as the information given to participants will ultimately have an impact upon the understanding of the project. Therefore, there were mixed views around the information and
understanding about the project (positive and negative). Again, this links in with key theme ‘Solution-focused’ as essentially the information, understanding, and expectations participants have will affect their perception of the meeting. Therefore, although the themes are identified as discrete ‘key themes’ they are ultimately linked with each other and this demonstrates the importance of looking at the thematic map as a whole when aiming to gain a fuller and more holistic overview of the data obtained.

The ‘Pupil-centred’ key theme and sub-themes ‘Familiarity of secondary school’ and ‘(Lack of) Pupil involvement’ illustrate the link between the idea that, although the SFPSMs were essentially seen as being about the pupil and seen in a positive light generally, however, if the pupil was unable to engage with the SFPSM and the process adequately then this view could also turn into a negative one. As the SFPSMs are essentially about the pupils if they did not attend them then the ‘pupil-centred’ nature of the meetings was reduced dramatically. There was also the sense that as the meetings were about the pupils, one of the views expressed by Joe in particular, was knowing staff at the secondary school. This also enhanced the pupil-centred nature of the SFPSMs as knowing staff at the secondary school before attending gave the pupils a sense of familiarity and reduced anxiety levels that are often present at transition.

Key theme ‘School views/attitude about SFPSMs’ and sub-theme ‘School choice (Lack of)’ also share a link, as they illustrate that the ‘choice’ that the schools had in terms of participating in the research would ultimately affect their views and attitudes about the SFPSMs. This was evident through the thematic analysis as some of the negative views around the SFPSM arose from School B, who had been ‘volunteered’ to take part in the research. Key theme ‘School views/attitude about SFPSMs’ also demonstrated the positive views that were held about the SFPSMs, which were affected by individual’s experiences, perceptions, knowledge and attitude towards the SFPSM.

Key theme ‘Positive impact on school life’ and key theme ‘Positive school/parental communication, engagement, participation and support’ are closely linked to sub-theme ‘Supportive factors’, as they all illustrate the factors that facilitated the SFPSMs. These are things like the positive
impact the meetings have had on pupils within the school environment and
how the communication between parents has also been enhanced through
the use of the SFPSMs.

The following chapter will consider the thematic analysis of the entire data
set in relation to the research questions, with an aim to answer them.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1. Chapter Overview

This chapter will begin by discussing the findings in relation to each of the research questions posed, illustrated by the entire data set, and then linking this back to the relevant literature. This will then be followed by taking a critical look at the methodology and the overall research project, highlighting strengths and weaknesses. The chapter will end with a discussion around the implications this research has for the EP profession, the EPS, the LA and ultimately result in thinking about ‘future directions’ or ‘next steps’ for a similar research project in the future.

5.2. Research Question 1: How is the SFPSM intervention process perceived by all participants involved?

This research question was answered through the interview process and then through the thematic analysis of the data set. It was evident through the analysis of the entire data set that the perceptions of the intervention or the SFPSMs varied, depending on participants’ previous knowledge of the PCP approach, the information they received, their personal opinions of the approach and their experience of the SFPSM. Some of the key themes that are particularly relevant to this question, based upon Figure 4.5 above are:

1. Pupil-Centred;
2. Involvement of (other) adults;
3. Information about the project;
4. Solution-focused;
5. Positive impact on school life;
6. School views/attitude about SFPSMs;
7. Understanding and expectations about the project/meeting.

The Pupil-Centred theme really reflects on the positive perceptions that were held about the meetings, from all the participants involved in the
project and most importantly by the pupils themselves. For example, all the pupils in the research expressed positive opinions, not only of the SFPSMs, but also of secondary school. This was an interesting point to emphasise, as two of the pupils had previously had negative experiences in their primary schools. Due to the negative experiences that Enrique had in his primary school, the SFPSM could not take place for him in primary and had to be subsequently carried out once he began secondary school, as home-school relations had broken down. Similarly, Joe had a negative experience in primary school and he really emphasised how much he preferred secondary school to primary school during his interview. This experience impacted positively upon the motivation and co-operation (Pomeroy, 1999) of the pupils involved in the research, once they were in secondary school. As the secondary school was seen as a ‘fresh start’ it was interesting to note that the views of the pupils had changed from negative to positive. This is in-line with the research carried out by Harris et al. (2006) looking at pupils who had been at risk of permanent exclusion and were offered a place in a different school. This resulted in positive outcomes reported by the pupils and parents in particular, such as: improved attendance; positive attitude towards school; more friendships; increased motivation at home and school; better relationships at home. All of these positive factors can also be attributed to the CYP who participated in the current research project, particularly the positive attitude that they had towards their secondary school experience so far, as the transition to secondary school was also a fresh start for the CYP.

A key theme that arose through the pupil interviews was that they liked the fact that the SFPSM was about ‘them’ and about things that other people ‘liked’ about them. This ensured that they had a positive experience of the SFPSM, which was apparent in their interviews and through the analysis. This also fits in with previous literature around pupil voice, particularly those with identified SEBD, as pupils want to be heard, seen and valued (Munn & Lloyd, 2005) and giving CYP attention and a chance to voice their opinions will support solutions around their disaffection with education (Gordon, 2001). It is important that pupils are given a voice, as this will have a positive impact on their self-esteem and their decision-making processes (Norwich & Kelly, 2006; Sinclair & Franklin, 2000). Some literature suggests that views from marginalised groups in society tend to be ignored
(Rose & Shevlin, 2004), therefore it is even more important to ensure that those CYP identified as being ‘at risk’ of exclusion were heard and given a sense of ‘control’ over what was going on in their lives. In the research carried out by Hayes (2004) the pupil in the research reported feeling listened to and actually talking in the meeting gave her a feeling of ‘happiness’. This research has demonstrated, to a certain extent, that giving CYP a voice can have a positive impact on their perceptions of secondary school and their subsequent inclusion within secondary school. As the SFPSM was largely concerned with the individual pupil and focusing on the positives and strengths that they had, this supported their self-esteem and confidence positively.

As the PCP approach was fundamental to the SFPSM it was interesting that participants emphasised how important they felt it was to have the pupil central to the meeting and meeting their needs. The TM stated how important she felt the ‘pupil-centred’ aspects of the meetings were and commented on the positive outcomes for the pupils involved in the SFPSMs. This re-instates the fundamental principles of PCP, particularly ensuring that the person is at the centre (Sanderson, 2000). Similarly, Keyes and Owen-Johnson (2003) found that using the PCP approach resulted in improving overall outcomes for CYP who were on SEN programmes and links in with the research carried out by Robertson et al. (2007) who found that PCP had a positive impact on many other areas of life for individuals such as: social networks; contact with family; contact with friends; community involvement; activities scheduled.

Paul indicated that the process of the meetings was positive for him, as he wanted more of them and he liked the fact that individuals wrote positive comments about him. Enrique held the view that the meetings were about him and was able to reflect this positively in his interview (‘We just talked about, me really’; ‘Umm that was about me (laughs) yeah, and they can try to help me’). The KW for Enrique reflected on the importance of working things through for Enrique and how the school could best meet his needs.

Involvement of [other] adults in the meetings really reflected on the positive and negative aspects of having adults involved in and engaged in the meetings and the many issues that this can bring with it. Some of the key negative aspects were highlighted by the TM such as: lack of engagement;
lack of attendance; lack of parental engagement; having a negative ‘mind-set’. Some of these factors mentioned have been identified in previous research around working with others, though to incorporate successful multi-agency working can be difficult and the changes require time, resources and commitment (Tett, 2005). In addition to this, research has shown some of the many barriers to multi-agency working and one that is particularly relevant to the current research is the differences and conflicts between different professional’s cultures and knowledge bases (Robinson et al., 2005). This was evident through the interview with the KW for Joe, as she felt that she did not have much information about the PCP approach or the project and, in a sense, the way of working within a PCP approach conflicted with her perceptions around how to support CYP with SEBD. In contrast, Mrs X, Miss Y, the TM, SW and the SSEP all held positive perceptions about the PCP approach and these were reflected in their understanding and views about the approach. However, despite the many negative perceptions identified there were also positive aspects of involving and having other adults present in the meetings such as: the enthusiasm from the SSEP; the interest of the link person (TM); inviting all those key individuals who are part of the young person’s life. The KW for Joe felt it was important to have a range of agencies in order to ensure that the best outcomes are reached for him. She felt that having a ‘collective’ approach from all professionals involved in Joe’s life would have a positive impact for Joe in supporting him and meeting his needs. This view is supported by the literature, as working together includes resources being pooled, CYP accessing services more easily (Costongs & Springnett, 1997; Richardson & Asthana, 2006; Whyte, 1997) and developing better links between families and agencies working with an individual child (Webb & Vulliamy, 2004). A key benefit to having multi-agency teams working together is the enhancement of home-school relations and research evidence suggests the importance of involving parents in the education of children with identified SEBD, whereby those schools who have been successful in achieving home-school links were able to make greater progress with their pupils (OfSTED, 1999). Linking in with working with parents, some of the research into PCP approaches has found that using such an approach provides families with enhanced co-ordination, particularly between Children and Adult Services (Carnaby et al., 2003); supports CYP and their families to plan for the future (Smart, 2004) and improved parent
participation in meeting with professionals and service providers (Miner & Bates, 1997). The research carried out by Taylor-Brown (2012) also found that working within the context of a PCP approach reduced power imbalances and encouraged participation from the CYP and their families. The ‘multi-agency working’ literature above, particularly with the work carried out by Webb and Vulliamy (2001), found that having a linked home-school support worker, working with children identified as being at risk of exclusion, resulted in positive outcomes for these pupils and for the schools that they were based in. Similarly, Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot (2007) found positive outcomes when a multi-disciplinary intervention was used for pupils excluded from primary school, as there was a reduction in the number of excluded days for individuals who were part of the intervention project. Interestingly, each of the pupils in the current research had an assigned key worker in school and this person was the liaison between home and school too. This also links in with the new guidance around SEN and around creating a ‘health, education and care plan’ (DfE, 2011a) within which professionals work closely together to meet the needs of CYP and to use ‘in-house support services and multi-agency approaches’ (Pavey & Visser, 2003, p. 180). Therefore, having a ‘holistic’ approach or ‘model of support’ can help to reduce exclusions and support those individuals with identified SEBD (Schnelling & Dew-Hughes, 2002). This theme is also linked to answering Research Question Two below as it highlights some of the factors that can be seen as supporting future SFPSMs.

*Information/communication about the project/meeting* is the theme that arose from all the participants and was directly derived from the interview schedule. It was interesting to see that there were mixed opinions about the information that had been given to individuals around the project. Although the adult participants were largely positive about the information that they received, it appeared that some of the CYP in the research were not fully aware of the research and what it entailed. This theme generally reflected the little information that had been given about the meetings and project, particularly from the point of view of the pupil and links back to giving CYP a voice and ensuring that they are seen as central to the SFPSMs. It is important to ensure that CYP have full knowledge about the SFPSMs and what it will entail, as it develops a positive anticipation for the meetings (Hayes, 2004). The key idea behind SFPSMs is to ensure that
CYP fully participate in the meetings, including the key people in their lives and to focus on what is important for them (Taylor-Brown, 2012). Through the preparation of the SFPSMs and the familiarity of staff that would be present at the SFPSMs this reduced some of the anxieties that the CYP can experience related to unfamiliarity with the process (Taylor-Brown, 2012).

On the other hand, the adult participants reflected positively upon the way in which they had received information about the project, whether that was through the SSEP, the school SENCo or the key worker for the pupil. The school staff reflected positively on the way in which information had been cascaded.

A key theme that was generated through the analysis was that participants discussed and described the meetings as being Solution-Focused. This demonstrated the perceptions that were held by participants about the SFPSMs and showed that they all expected there to be a ‘solution-focused’ element within the meetings. Again, the SFPSMs were seen in a positive light by all participants and this was reflected in the way that they perceived the meetings and also what they expected from the meetings. This supports previous research within this area as using the solution-focused approach has been found to be effective when it is used with children with SEBD (Franklin et al., 2008) and when working with pupils with academic and social concerns (Littrell et al., 1995). In addition to this, the solution-focused element of the SFPSMs focuses upon the strengths that individuals have and encourages them to look at the resources within themselves that they can apply to a ‘positive change process’ (Bond, et al., 2013, in press). From the analysis of the data, particularly from the pupil data, it is evident that one of the key things that the pupils valued was that the meeting was about them, but also the fact that adults had to write up what they ‘liked’ about them, resulting in positive feelings about the meetings (Hayes, 2004). This highlighted and reinforced their strengths and channelled them positively to support them in making the small step changes that had been identified through the SFPSM.

Positive impact on school life was a theme that was reflected by all participants, as they all felt that the meetings did have a positive impact upon the pupil in terms of outcomes, both socially and academically. It was
interesting to see the positive self-reflection one pupil (Enrique) had throughout the process of the meetings, as he was able to think about and reflect on how things had been previously and how things had changed for him in secondary school. The members of school staff who were interviewed also reflected positively in terms of the outcomes for the pupil and felt that they had seen some positive changes in the pupil. Joe also highlighted his perceptions of the impact that the meeting had upon his school life. He felt that the meetings had been positive for him and he had developed a positive perception about secondary school. This theme reflects some of the research within the area of PCP approaches, as positive outcomes have been achieved for CYP when PCP meetings have been used (Taylor-Brown, 2012; Robertson, et al., 2005). Generally when CYP have been given a ‘voice’ this has resulted in them feeling ‘listened to’ (Hayes, 2004) and this can have a positive impact on their motivation, independence and perception of personal control (Roller, 1998). Therefore, giving CYP a voice allows them to participate in decisions that affect their education (Harding & Atkinson, 2009), as they can provide information about their skills and abilities, which can support successful outcomes (Todd, 2003). The suggestion is that just through allowing pupils to have a voice and being included with a meeting about them can have a positive impact on their perceptions of school life.

School views/attitude about SFPSMs was a theme that generally arose from the school staff interviewed for the research. The individuals generally had a very positive attitude about the SFPSMs, although one of the adults interviewed did not share this view as she felt that she had not seen any outcomes for the pupil because he had not attended any of the meetings (Joe’s KW). Essentially the personal opinion, background, experience and understanding around the PCP approaches that each of the adult individuals had was reflected upon the way that they felt about the SFPSMs. Although staff interviewed were positive about the meetings some of the more practical aspects of the SFPSMs were points of discussion and contention. For example, having the ‘time’ to actually carry out the meetings properly, having the ‘right’ adults involved, having the ‘right’ pupils involved and so on. These points also link back to the factors that Robertson et al (2005) identified as being essential in ensuring that a PC plan was effective for individuals and those that are of particular
relevance are: the commitment of the PCP facilitator; a facilitator who has the planning of the PC meeting as part of their job role; involvement of the individual that the meeting is about; having a PC team (including leadership); having managers deliver PCP meetings as facilitators. These factors are discussed in terms of the implications that they have for schools and other agencies involved in PCP approaches in section 5.9.1.2. below.

Understanding and expectations about the project/meeting [Pupil and Staff] reflected the understanding held about the meetings by all participants and is divided into the ways in which the pupil and staff understood what was going on. It also reflected the way in which in information had been shared with participants as this ultimately had an impact upon the understanding of the SFPSMs. All participants reflected a positive understanding about the meetings and around what they expected would happen at the meetings.

5.3. Research Question Two: How do participants perceive SFPSMs could work successfully in the future?

The answer to this question was directly derived through the interview and participants were asked how they felt things could be made better for future meetings and what they would change, which included the view of the SSEP. Although the ‘key’ themes for answering this question are provided below it must be noted that there is some over-lap across the themes as they are all essentially describing facilitators and barriers for future meetings. Therefore, this sub-section should be read as a whole rather than the information provided for each individual theme presented. The key themes that are relevant in answering this question are:

1. Future Directions/Training;

2. Supportive Factors;

3. Barriers Identified (sub-themes = communication, practical aspects and appropriate referrals);

4. Practical aspects of the meetings.

Future Directions/Training is directly linked to what the participants felt they would like to change for future meetings. For Paul the answer was simply
that he wanted to have more of these meetings and that he wanted to involve even more individuals in the meetings than were currently present. In comparison, the TM had a few ideas that she reported would be beneficial in supporting the implementation of future SFPSMs and these are: having a commitment from schools to the SFPSM; having some teaching or training input around person-centred approaches; using the meetings as part of the ‘whole school system’.

Supportive Factors were highlighted by school professionals as they felt that certain aspects of the meetings supported the meetings positively, namely their own personal interest and training experience of the PCP approach and they reported that these factors supported the facilitation of the meetings.

One of the key Barriers Identified, particularly for Joe, was ensuring that he was present in the SFPSM. This theme arose from the professionals interviewed and indicated how they felt that not having the pupil present in the SFPSMs was not beneficial for anyone, particularly Joe himself. However, when considering Joe’s personal circumstances and social background, they were more complex than the other CYP in the research, and as school and social exclusion have been described as a ‘multi-level’ problem (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007) it was essential that he was supported at all the three levels of home, teacher and school. Although he was supported by school staff and the school itself, it was difficult to engage Joe’s mother. Parental involvement is a factor seen as supporting the management of behaviour difficulties and supporting inclusion in the classroom (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991). In fact, the research carried out by Smart (2004) identifies the importance of involving parents, particularly in the transition planning of children with severe/complex learning difficulties, and using an approach like the PCP approach to enhance and support the process of transition. Therefore, considering Joe’s personal circumstances, his home life and lack of parental engagement with the education system this had a negative impact on his school attendance, and ultimately his attendance for the SFPSMs.

Barriers were also highlighted around communication issues, particularly the communication of ‘appropriate referrals’ as Miss Y (SENCo for Enrique) felt that sometimes the primary schools were unable to identify youngsters
who were in most need of, and would benefit the most from the SFPSMs. This would suggest a need for a consistent approach and set criteria in identifying CYP who could be part of the SFPSM. There was also some mention about the practical aspects of meetings (i.e. time, an adequate room) which could be potential barriers for future SFPSMs. This is similar to the research carried out by Everson and Zhang (2000) who also found that some of the key barriers in using the PCP approach were around: difficulty in scheduling meetings for all members to attend; involving others apart from the service providers; difficulty in involving peers; opposing views of members in the meeting.

Practical aspects of the meeting is the theme that highlights areas identified for the future successful implementation of SFPSMs from all the participants, particularly the adults. There were some positive and negative views reported in relation to the way in which the meeting was perceived by individual participants. Joe particularly highlighted that he did not like the fact that he had to fill sheets in during the preparation of the meetings and highlighted his dislike for the sheets. However, there were also some negative perceptions around the meeting from the member of school staff, as she felt that she had not been given any information or had little knowledge about the research project (‘Umm, before nothing cos I didn’t, I wasn’t aware of it’).

Joe’s suggestions for changing the meetings in future were more around them being more ‘fun’ and having more ‘pictures’ on the sheets and more ‘colour’. However, some of the suggestions that Joe made were not practical or realistic (‘Do it in a roller skating park or something or in a theme park’). This highlights some issues around being more responsive to the different learning styles of the children, particularly for those with identified SEBD, as they may experience literacy difficulties (Carroll et al., 2005; Snowling et al., 2000). Therefore, expecting them to complete handouts in which they have to write may not be a realistic target to set but perhaps more creative, fun and accessible (Hayes, 2004) ways need to be considered to engage the CYP in the preparation stage of the SFPSMs. The school professional really struggled to say what she thought would support future SFPSMs as she felt that she had not really seen any success in the current meetings due to Joe not being present in meetings.
A key practical issue that was evident throughout the interviews was the ‘space’ to carry out the meetings and this had to be appropriate for the SFPSM. In relation to this, other factors such as time, arranging the times and dates and ensuring that others attended the meetings were also practical aspects that were identified.

5.4. Summary of Research Question One, Research Question Two and implications for future meetings.

A number of key areas were highlighted through the thematic analysis for ways in which future SFPSMs could be carried out and for future school involvement with using SFPSMs and these main themes are outlined below with ways to address the areas identified:

⇒ More training for school staff - which would include a pre-training questionnaire being sent out to participating schools in order to identify their needs, resulting in delivery of training by the SSEP or a member of the EPS around SFPSMs, particularly emphasising the philosophy of the PCP approach;

⇒ School professionals to be given ‘more time’ to fully participate in the SFPSM and carry them out - which would include the Senior Leadership Team taking on board the SFPSM and understanding the time that it needs to be delivered and providing the SFPSM ‘lead’ in school some designated time to do this work;

⇒ Inviting more individuals to the actual SFPSMs - which would include a broader range of professionals and individuals that are part of the lives of the CYP participating in the SFPSM;

⇒ Ensuring that the focus is on the ‘pupil’, and ensuring pupil participation in the SFPSM – this would ensure that the CYP who the meeting is about is present in the SFPSM and the meeting should not take place without them, as this does not fit in with the ethos of the PCP approach of the SFPSM. It may well mean considering different venues to access the pupil i.e. the home or local library, or perhaps the professionals involved to be flexible in re-arranging a SFPSM impromptu as and when the pupil arrives in school (though the practical implications of doing this will need to be considered by individual schools);
⇒ Continue to use the solution-focused principles in the SFPSM – these need to be integral to the SFPSM as all participants, particularly the CYP, were aware that the meetings were about supporting them in secondary school and thinking about ways to do this. This area could be further reinforced and developed through the initial training on SFPSMs delivered to participating schools around the ‘psychology’ of using solution-focused principles, the benefits of this approach and the reasons why this is a central component of the SFPSM;

⇒ Ensuring that schools who use the SFPSM have a ‘choice’ in doing so and are able to make an informed decision around this – this needs to be addressed through ‘taster’ sessions delivered by the EPS on the SFPSM for potential schools and to provide schools with the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the approach before they decide whether or not they would like to take part;

⇒ Having a ‘personal interest’ in the SFPSM is beneficial to the implementation of the meetings – this is an area that may be difficult to address, as individuals will either have a personal interest in the SFPSM or they will not. However, one way to address this is to hold presentations for local schools and provide them with an opportunity to see what a SFPSM entails, which may develop some interest in the meetings from individuals;

⇒ Preparation of pupil material – one of the things that came through the interviews was the ways in which the material to prepare the pupil for secondary school was presented. Joe made the point that he would prefer to have worksheets that were in different colours and with more pictures. One thing to consider would be the different learning styles of the CYP involved in the SFPSM and to revise the way that the materials are presented so that they are more child-friendly.

5.5. Research Question Three: How does the Educational Psychologist perceive her role in developing this approach?

The final research question is directly linked to the SSEP and about her role in developing the SFPSMs and is somewhat difficult to answer through
the thematic analysis as the themes that have been generated are not necessarily linked in to answering this question directly. Some of the comments that were made by the other professionals supported the role of the SSEP as being central to the process and triangulated the view that the SSEP and her enthusiasm contributed positively towards the development and engagement of professionals in the use of SFPSMs. Through the analysis of the interview data generated by the SSEP and the questions asked of the SSEP, it is evident that the SSEP does view her role to be quite central to the development of this approach, though she states that this is largely dependent on the needs of each individual school. For example, one school had taken on the PCP approach and incorporated it into their whole-school approach already, which meant that the role of the SSEP was to act as a ‘sounding board’ for members of staff as and when needed. However, in the second school in the project the SSEP felt that they needed more support in the development and implementation of this approach in to their whole-school system. The SSEP felt that she would like all schools to be more independent in using the SFPSMs and would like her involvement to be minimal in the future once schools become more confident in applying the approach. She also highlighted that one of the ways in which she sees her role in the future is to provide training and support to schools and to enable them to make an informed decision around whether or not they would want to take part in the research. This would then ensure that schools who chose to sign up to the project were fully aware of what they are signing up to and be familiar with the approach to ensure its successful implementation.

When considering the role of the EP in general, it is generally described as comprising of: consultation; assessment; intervention; training and research (SEED, 2002). Although the SEED (2002) identifies the above five functions for the role of the EP, the profession also needs to ensure that we make a ‘distinct contribution’ (Cameron, 2006) in meeting the needs of children and families. This work can be achieved by working at the levels of the individual, whole school and LA level (SEED, 2002; Farrell et al, 2006, DfEE, 2000; Curran, Gersch & Wolfendale, 2003).

EPs are well placed to provide advice and support around child development needs and to empower individuals supporting CYP successfully through applying the skills of consultation (Leadbetter, 2006).
Therefore, EPs are well placed to evoke systemic change through their application of psychology in relation to CYP (Beaver, 1996). Taking a systemic approach through the application of the SFPSMs can support interventions that take place systemically rather than just individual casework (Kelly, Woolfson & Boyle, 2008). This systems work can be done through consultation, training, research and involvement in organisational change (Boyle and MacKay 2007) and support staff to develop their skills (Stobie, Gemmell, Moran & Randall, 2002), empowering staff to make positive systemic changes within the school context.

It was evident from the perception of the SSEP that she viewed her role in the current research as one of providing consultation and training to those schools who would want to implement the SFPSM in future. The notion being that the SSEP would provide initial training of the SFPSMs which would look at the process and underlying psychology behind the approach, the way the SFPSM should be carried out, preparation and so on. This would then be followed by the school staff who would be delivering the SFPSM to shadow the SSEP when she is carrying out a SFPSM (with parental consent) and the SSEP to provide guidance and support around this. Although the skills and experiences of the SSEP cannot be matched with school personnel to deliver the SFPSMs, in terms of her background in psychology and child development, it is envisaged that the SSEP (and other members of the EPS) will support school staff in building capacity around the independent delivery and use of the SFPSMs through regular advice, guidance and supervision.

5.6. Summary

The findings from the current research suggest that on the whole the SFPSMs were seen in a positive light by all those individuals involved in the process, with particular emphasis being placed on the focus of the pupil and ensuring that the meeting is about them. Even when professionals highlighted areas of improvement this was in relation to ensuring that the pupil was present in the SFPSM, as they were the main focus of the SFPSMs and if they were not present then the value of the SFPSM was seen to decline.

Based upon some of the themes highlighted above and through working on the development of SFPSMs a ‘tentative model’ to support the future
development and application of the SFPSMs has been outlined in Appendix K.

5.7. Researcher evaluation of the SFPSM

The underlying ‘hypothesis’ behind the SFPSMs was that through the use of these meetings the CYP identified would feel a sense of belonging, feel positive about secondary school and feel that they have some control over what is happening in their lives through addressing the issues that are of most concern to them with the most important adults in their lives. The fundamental aim of the SFPSM was to ensure that the CYP were central to the meeting (PCP element), there was a focus upon their strengths (Positive Psychology) and that there was a pathway of solutions to the issues that were of most concern to the CYP. Through the interviews with the CYP and the outcomes for the CYP (the fact that they are all in school and have not been excluded through the duration of the research) this indicates that the SFPSMs have been successful in achieving what they initially aimed to achieve, which was to reduce the risk of exclusion for those CYP who had been identified as ‘at risk’ of exclusion. In addition to this, the research highlighted the positive attitude the CYP had towards secondary school which was apparent during the interviews and which was a negative attitude when they were in primary school. It appears that all the different facets that had been incorporated within the SFPSMs were equally beneficial for the CYP and for the success of the SFPSMs in relation to the CYP. They all valued that they were central to the meeting and that adults in their lives focused upon the positive aspects of their lives rather than the negative, which had a positive impact upon their self-esteem and confidence. Therefore, it is the combination of the PCP, solution-focused and strengths-based approach that has had a positive impact upon the CYP which may not have been as apparent had the approaches been used in isolation.

5.8. Critical reflections of the research

The initial aim of this piece of research was to look at reducing exclusions within a LA in the North West of England through the use of PCP approaches and multi-agency working. The idea was to identify children with SEBD who would be ‘at risk’ of exclusion at the Year 6/7 transition phase. However, although the initial children identified were those who
were perceived by their primary schools as being ‘at risk’ of exclusion, this focus changed to a degree, to look at those children and young people who would be ‘vulnerable’ at the Year 6/7 transition phase, and particularly at a higher ‘risk’ of exclusion.

5.8.1. Multi-agency working.

The initial involvement from multi-agencies was to contribute towards the overall development of the project and then for those agencies who were involved with individual pupils to continue to support the pupil through the SFPSM. However, as the project went on, the focus of the multi-agency aspect also seemed to evaporate, as the numbers of individuals involved from different agencies reduced dramatically and the SFPSMs essentially became school only meetings for the pupils identified to take part in the research project. It is unclear why this happened over the course of the research project and could be due to a number of reasons which are hypothesised below:

- Individuals lost interest in the project;
- Individuals felt that this was not something that would be worth their while spending time on;
- Individuals failed to grasp the concept of the project and therefore lost interest;
- Other more ‘important’ matters arose in their day to day work;
- They did not have the time available to give to the project.

5.8.2. Participants and parental engagement.

The first area to consider is the participants in the research and some of the difficulties that the researcher experienced in contacting participants, mainly parents. A key feature of this research was not only to get the views of the children and young people who would be involved in this research but also to obtain the views of those adults who support them in their lives (at home and at school). Unfortunately, due to the nature of the background of some of the parents it was difficult to obtain any of the views of the parents for a range of different factors. One of the key factors and key barriers that the researcher came across in contacting parents was to actually engage them in the interview itself. Although two of the parents were quite positive about being part of the project and being available for
interview it was a real struggle actually getting them to sit down and carry out the interview. For example, Paul’s mother was contacted by the researcher on numerous occasions for dates to be arranged for the interview, and at her convenience i.e. when the SFPSMs took place, but on both occasions failed to carry out the interview due to a number of reasons or failure of Paul’s mother attending. Similarly Joe’s mother was even more difficult to engage by the researcher and the only time she engaged with the process was when a home visit was carried out by the SSEP and the researcher, which did not result in an interview. To be fair to Joe’s mother, she was in a difficult situation and had involvement from Social Services, which was a priority for her in her life at the time. Although it was essential to obtain the views of the parents of the pupils, unfortunately this did not take place in this research and will be an area to think about and consider for future research involving parents.

There has been a lot of government and academic research in the area of parental engagement (DCSF, 2007, 2008, 2009b; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Harris & Goodall, 2008) and about the importance of engaging parents, particularly in their child’s education. It has been noted that a factor that can influence parental engagement is socio-economic status and level of education (Harris & Goodall, 2008). There is also the added factor of parent’s attitudes towards education and this having a negative impact on their engagement (Sacker, Schoon & Bartley, 2002; Feinstein & Sabates, 2006). Harris & Goodall (2008) highlight a number of barriers to parental engagement which are outlined below:

- Lack of time and childcare facilities;
- Difficulties parents face in interacting with teachers;
- Role definitions and responsibility assigned to the parents (p. 280).

In addition to this, the original idea for this research project was to include four pupils in the research project, which would include individuals who were also part of their life and supporting them (parent, school professional and another professional). However, due to unforeseen circumstances one of the pupils initially identified for the research actually moved to another country over the summer of 2012, which meant that he was no longer part of the research project. There is often a difficulty, when working with
children and young people with SEBD or who may be 'at risk' of exclusion, that as they go through the process of schooling they may become disaffected by the schooling process, which ultimately leads to them leaving school in some way or another. This is a reality and a risk that the researcher was dealing with when carrying out research with a vulnerable group identified as having SEBD and reflects real world research and variables that the researcher was unable to control.

One of the key things that the researcher was unable to control was the way in which participants were recruited for the research. Therefore, it was not possible to pick up on or reflect on the way in which the schools explained the research project to parents and pupils and this was largely at the discretion of the schools involved. Perhaps in order to have a more consistent approach to the research in future would be for the researcher to approach each individual parent and pupil, with the support of a member of school staff that they are familiar with, and discuss and explain the research to them and give them the opportunity to ask questions or discuss aspects of the research they had questions about. This would also overcome any barriers that the parents may have around literacy and would also be an opportunity for the parents to become familiar with the researcher and what the research will entail.

5.8.3. School and researcher effects.

When considering this research it is important to consider the role and impact that the actual schools themselves had upon the successful implementation of the SFPSMs and the way this may have influenced the pupils to a certain extent. For example, School A was a school who wanted to take part in the research and was also a school within which the PCP approach was already being used for children and young people with a Statement of SEN. This meant that the perceptions that School A had around the SFPSMs were positive, as they were familiar with the PCP approach and valued the approach as being central to their working practices for individuals with a Statement of SEN. However, this may also have had the opposite effect, as the school SENCo in School A felt that the pupil identified for the research was not one that they would have selected to be vulnerable or 'at risk' of exclusion and would therefore not have been part of the research, had it been the choice of the secondary school. The
fact that School A actually volunteered and wanted to take part in the research will have had a positive impact on their involvement within the research, rather than if they felt that had been ‘persuaded’ to take part, like School B. Staff from School B had been ‘volunteered’ to take part in the research and told that it would be useful for them to be involved in the research which meant that the initial senior member of staff had not wholeheartedly taken this approach on board or fully understood it. This will have had some impact on the implementation of the approach in School B and could perhaps account for some of the negative attitudes about the approach and use of SFPSMs. However, one member of staff from School B was extremely positive about the approach and reported that she was interested in this approach and would be considering using the approach in the future, though she felt like she needed further training and support in the area.

Another important aspect which will have influenced the success and the implementation of the SFPSMs will be the ethos of the school, the school policies and any prior training or experience members of staff will have had around the PCP approach.

Although there were no such explicit researcher effects, it must be noted that for School A, the researcher was the named EP. Therefore, this may have had some impact in terms of the participation of school staff and how engaging and accommodating they were in terms of being interviewed for the research. This also raises the ethical questions about roles and the ability to differentiate the roles as an EP and as a researcher, which were quite difficult at times. Despite the researcher’s best efforts of keeping the research and case discussion separate, it was difficult to do this on occasions as the SENCo and other members of staff would see the researcher in school and begin discussion about other pupils and their concerns for them. In addition to this, the researcher was seen to be part of the research and the project right from the beginning of the project, which may have influenced some of the things that were said in the interviews, as the research may well have been perceived to be linked directly to the EPS, which the researcher was seen to be a part of.
5.8.4. Research design.

The research design used in this research was a case study design based on Yin’s (2009) idea of case study design and this brings with it its own set of limitations. Although a total of nine individuals were interviewed within this research it is still a rather small sample size and will have some implications around the generalisability and transferability of the results. However, despite this obvious criticism against the research design, the results that have been yielded are rich, and qualitative in nature, which are in line with the epistemological position and design of this research.

Although every effort was made to ensure that the research adhered to the principles and values of reliability and validity it is often difficult to say how reliable semi-structured interviews are in reality, despite them having a set sequence of questions that are asked of participants, the whole purpose of having semi-structured questions is to ensure some sense of flexibility within the interview schedule and to follow any leads that the participant may want to discuss.

In addition to this, the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and the reliability of the analysis can come into question as the analysis is largely dependent upon the subjective interpretation of the individual carrying out the analysis. However, if the transcriptions were analysed by more than one researcher then perhaps a more reliable and objective analysis can be obtained from the data. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to organise inter-rater reliability for the thematic analysis due to limited time and resources (fellow Trainee Educational Psychologists).

5.8.5. Research interviews.

When thinking about the research interviews that took place the researcher had time to reflect on the interviews during the transcription phase of the data analysis and had a chance to reflect on the language used and the questions asked, particularly of the pupils. One of the key things that stood out from the interviews was the way in which the questions were worded, and this was not always appropriate for the pupils who made up the sample of participants. In a review of the literature looking at the language skills of children with Emotional, Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) Benner et al. (2002)
found that 71% of individuals who have been identified as having EBD also experienced clinically significant language deficits and 57% of individuals who had a diagnosis of language deficits were also identified as having EBD. Therefore further careful considerations should have been made when composing the interview schedule for the pupils within the research. Some of the questions were too long and should have been broken down into smaller parts for the pupils to be able to answer them appropriately. One of the pupils had English as an additional language and adjustments should have been made for his interview questions in order to allow him easier access in answering the questions and understanding them. A future action would perhaps be to carry out pilot interview questions in order to try and eradicate any issues that may arise from the interview schedules.

5.8.6. Data collection.

Although the main type of data that was collected for this research was through the interviews, the researcher was in the process of triangulating the data through obtaining additional data for each pupil such as: behaviour logs; incident logs and attendance to provide further in-depth contextual information for each pupil. However, due to the lack of parental engagement it was not possible to get consent forms signed by parents in order to obtain this additional data for the research. A future action to triangulate the data collection further and enhance the ‘richness’ and ‘quality’ of the data could result in any of the following methods of triangulation: researcher observations of the SFPSMs; researcher observations of the SFPSMs preparation delivered by the SSEP; documentary evidence such as notes from the meetings; additional data collection as suggested above. Through using the triangulation methods suggested above this would have enhanced the ‘richness’ of the data collected and also allowed for a holistic overview of the SFPSMs, resulting in enhancing the validity of the research further. It would also have allowed for greater insight into the process of the SFPSM and more clarity around how the meetings were carried out. However, due to the time constraints of submitting the research it was not possible to include any of the additional methods of data collection in the current research but these are useful considerations for future research in this area.
5.9. Implications of the research

5.9.1. Implications for practice.

After considering the data and the analysis of the data two key areas can be identified for future professional practice:

1. Implications for EP practice.

2. Implications for the LA and schools in the authority.

5.9.1.1. EP practice.

In terms of EP practice, the research has highlighted that it is important to have a key person who can facilitate meetings for children and young people, such as a SFPSM. A positive impact has been seen from the pupils who have been part of the research project, which reflects on the importance of having SFPSMs for individuals with SEBD and those who may be ‘at risk’ of exclusion at the Year 6/7 transition phase. The EP who co-ordinated the research and helped facilitate the SFPSMs had a central role in supporting schools with the process and helping facilitate the meetings. The role of the EP was also viewed in a positive light and many of the individuals interviewed felt that they would like further training within the use of the SFPSMs in order to facilitate them independently in their settings and feel more confident when carrying out SFPSMs. Therefore, the role of the EP can be seen in the following capacities: Facilitator; Supporter; Trainer, which will vary depending on the needs of the schools involved.

In addition to this, as the role of the EP continues to expand and there is a move towards ‘traded services’ the EPS has developed aspects of their service delivery model that are ‘traded’ or ‘commissioned’ in by schools (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). Therefore, the development of the SFPSMs within the LA will have positive implications for the EPS in developing the ‘traded’ aspect of the service delivery model, as schools and other services become aware of the SFPSMs and the value of the PCP approach in supporting pupils with SEBD.
5.9.1.2. Local Authority and school implications.

When considering the implications that the research has for the LA and for schools, the key area that is highlighted is the positive impact and inclusion of the pupils identified within the research that has been seen through the project. Although the pupils were identified as being ‘at risk’ of exclusion at the Year 6/7 phase of transition, they have successfully made the transition into secondary school and have given positive feedback about secondary school. However, a key thing to consider and remember is that the success of the pupils secondary school transition cannot only be accounted for by the SFPSM as other extraneous variables such as school ethos, school experiences, personal circumstances and so on have not been accounted for. Therefore, a key implication for the LA and for schools is that the SFPSMs can be used to successfully support, engage and include pupils with SEBD into secondary school during the transition from Year 6/7. It also highlights the importance of taking on board and understanding the key principles behind the SFPSMs (PCP approach, Solution-focused approach), which means that schools who wish to use the SFPSMs in future will need to have further training in the approach to develop their understanding and ability to successfully implement the approach. The key to the success of the SFPSMs approach is having a positive and open attitude towards the approach and ensuring that the Senior Leadership Team in schools are aware of the approach and what it entails and for schools to want to take the approach on board and be able to make an ‘informed decision’ about using the approach. The table below highlights the factors that Robertson et al. (2005) found as supporting effective PC plans and the implications that this has for future schools intending on using the SFPSMs in their schools.

Table 5.1

Supportive factors for SFPSMs and the implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supportive Factor:</th>
<th>Implication:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The commitment of the PCP facilitator.</td>
<td>- Ensure that the facilitator for the meetings is chosen based upon their ‘commitment’ to the approach and</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>their background experience, knowledge and willingness to engage with the PCP process and SFPSMs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A facilitator who has the planning of the PC meeting as part of their job role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>-Ensuring that the individual who will facilitate the SFPSM, particularly within school, has the time and flexibility to do so. This would be seen as part of their job role and they would be provided with the time to do this. For example, in School A, the SENCo co-ordinates all the PCP reviews and has the time pencilled into her timetable for planning and preparation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Involvement of the individual that the meeting is about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>-This is an essential component of the PCP approach, as the meeting is about the individual and it is essential that they are present. This is of particular relevance for children identified as having SEBD in providing them with a ‘voice’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Having a PC team (including leadership) and having managers deliver PCP meetings as facilitators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>-It is of utmost importance that the Senior Leadership Team within schools are familiar with and aware of the PCP approach, as it needs to be a whole-school approach and incorporated into the school ethos.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 5.10. Future directions

A key initiative which will be taking place in the summer of 2013 is that the results of the research will be disseminated by the researcher through a presentation to the following groups of professionals:
⇒ LA senior management team;
⇒ Secondary schools in the LA, including the two participating secondary schools (mainly Head teachers);
⇒ The EPS and other teams (SEN Team, Additional Needs Team).

The initial aim behind the current piece of research was to look at the use of SFPSMs with children with SEBD, as being identified as being ‘at risk’ of exclusion, and using this approach as early intervention to prevent exclusion. Although there is no overt measure to record the correlation between the SFPSM and the prevention of exclusion, the only way in which to see if the approach has been successful is to see if the children who have been part of the research are still in the secondary school and currently they are. Therefore a range of areas have been considered and thought through for future research within this area and these are outlined below:

- One of the things to consider is the schools within which the research was carried out in terms of their motivation and commitment to the PCP approach, as this was not a variable that was controlled for within the context of the current research. Interestingly though, the schools that participated in the current research project could be described as ‘opposite’ in terms of their attitude and approach around the SFPSMs, as one of the school already used the PCP approach for SEN reviews, whereas the other school did not. Therefore if the focus of the current research was to look at comparing the two schools in terms of outcomes for pupils this is something that could have easily been achieved. However, as the focus of the research was looking at the views of the participants on SFPSMs a comparative study was not carried out. Perhaps in the future research can be carried out through having participating schools included in the research that are matched in terms of their ethos and approach to the SFPSMs and in terms of staff training and staff acceptability of the approach;

- Another thing that would enhance the reliability and validity of the research would be to include some form of pre and post measures of outcomes for the pupils who are going through the process of a SFPSM. This measure could be a form of questionnaire, survey,
observations or qualitative data around behaviour incidents that have taken place in the primary school and the secondary school, which will need to be consistent. Therefore some tools to measure qualitatively and quantitatively (behaviour incident logs, attendance figures, pre/post questionnaires for parents, pupils and teachers) the impact that the SFPSMs have had on the individuals who have been part of the process would enhance the reliability and validity of future research, particularly once a ‘consistent’ approach for identifying pupils has been established;

- Another possibility to consider would be to have a control group who does not have access to the SFPSMs and see if there is any impact on those who are part of a SFPSM and those that are not. However, having a control group would raise certain ethical issues about inclusion and exclusion in the research and would need to be carefully thought through;

- It may also be useful to consider having a larger sample size in future research to ensure more generalisability of findings and to include a larger sample of the population;

- Parental engagement is a key area that has been identified through this research as an area that needs further investigation, as parents identified for this piece of research were hard to engage. Therefore, some further thought will need to be given as to how best to engage parents, particularly from a ‘hard to reach’ group;

- To use the ‘steering group’ as a working party to develop clearer guidelines and criteria in identifying pupils for the research, ensuring that this is consistent across professionals;

- Before the SFPSMs take place it is essential that all participating schools are fully aware of what this will involve and have the opportunity for discussion around the SFPSMs before they take place. This training session can be delivered by the EPS as a whole school training to ensure that all school staff are aware of SFPSMs and fully understand what the approach entails.

5.11. Concluding comments

The current piece of research is a small scale study looking at the views of individuals, particularly CYP, who have been part of a SFPSM, supporting
them in the transition from Year 6 to 7. Overall, the impact and the outcomes of the SFPSMs appear to be positive from most of the participants in the research, particularly from the CYP involved. The key theme that should be emphasised from the research are the positive views that the CYP had about secondary school, in contrast to their perceptions of primary school. Despite the positive outcomes for the CYP in the research it is important to emphasise that within the context of the current research it was not possible to control for any extraneous variables such as school policies, key workers, pupils home lives, and therefore comparisons cannot be made between the schools and CYP involved. However, the current study suggests that SFPSMs can have positive outcomes for CYP identified as having SEBD, particularly when the adults involved have a reasonable understanding of the SFPSM and its purpose and wholeheartedly take the approach on board. Considering recent government legislation (DfE, 2011a) there is a suggestion that a PCP transition planning is a tool that can be used to support CYP and their families and is an important contributory factor that can make a difference to CYP’s lives.
References:


Her Majesty’s Stationery Office. HMSO. (2001). *Special educational needs and disability act.* London: HMSO.


Reyes, O., Gillock, K. L., Kobus, K., & Sanchez, B. (2000). A longitudinal examination of the transition into senior high school for adolescents from
urban, low-income status, and predominantly minority backgrounds. 
*American Journal of Community Psychology, 28*, 519-44.

*Educational Psychology in Practice, 15* (2), 116-121.


Taylor-Brown, M. (2012). How did young people identified as presenting with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties experience a person-


APPENDIX A

Pupil Preparation

- Getting to know you materials (e.g. from listen to me booklet)
- Good day - What’s going well for the pupil at the moment?
- Bad day - What’s not going so well/when is it sometimes better/what needs to change/what will a small change look like?
- Transition - What is the pupil looking forward to? What are the pupil’s worries about high school?
- Then discussion around:
  - why the meeting has been called
  - who will attend, who would the pupil like to bring
  - what format the meeting will take
  - what contribution will the pupil make and how

Meeting Format

1. How will you know later that this meeting has been successful?
2. What we like and admire about the pupil.
3. Year 7 - What is the pupil looking forward to? What are the pupil’s worries about high school?
4. Now

What’s going well for the pupil at the moment?

What’s not going so well/when is it sometimes better/what needs to change/what will a small change look like?

From different perspectives

- Pupil; Parents/carers; School; others.

5. The main concerns are how to……

6. Action plan- In how many ways can we…….What? By whom? When?
• This is a workbook for you, to help you think about how you want your life to be. In your workbook, you can write about:

  Things you like

  Things you don't like

  What is important to you

  Things in your life that you want to stay the same

  Things in your life that you want to change

• You can put the information in in whatever way you want.

  Some people write, some draw pictures, some stick photos or pictures. Add more paper if you need it.
Who are the people in my life?

- Who are the people who are most important to me?
- Who are the people who know me best?
- Who do I spend most time with?

People in my family

People at school

Neighbours and friends
What is going well for me at the moment?

- At home

- At school

- With my friends

- My hobbies
My meeting to think about going to high school...

- Why is the meeting happening?
- Who will be there?
- Who would I like to bring?
- Where will it be? When?
- What will the meeting be like?
Based upon the following:

- **Individual Factors** = Physical health; being male; aggressive behaviour; ethnicity; children in care; SEBD; EAL and travellers.

- **Family and Peer Group Factors** = Single parent families; family history of criminal activity; home circumstances (domestic violence); young mothers; parents own a lack of education; parental drug or alcohol issues; peer involvement with drugs and crime and peer relationships.

- **Community and Economic Factors** = High population turn over; drug use; low SES; deprivation; FSM; poverty; high unemployment and parental occupation.

- **School Factors** = Low school achievement; learning difficulties; SEN; poor acquisition of basic skills; academic problems leading to behavioural problems; poor sense of belonging; response to the curriculum; staff response to pupil; staff training in behaviour management.
INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

Your child’s secondary school is part of a ‘pilot’ project being carried out in the borough in conjunction with the Educational Psychology Service. The project is interested in looking at early intervention to support pupils, who may be vulnerable at the Year 6/7 transition phase, whilst working in a multi-agency and child-centred framework and is interested in your views and your child’s views about your participation in the project in order to move it forward.

This research project is also part of a student research project, which forms part of a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

Please take time to read the following information carefully and decide whether or not you would like to take part.

**Who will conduct the research?**

The research will be carried out by Miss Nadia Tabassum (Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist) from the University of Manchester, in partnership with School A, School B and the Educational Psychology Service.

**What is the aim of the research?**

The main aim of the research is to look at participants’ views about the process of working in a multi-agency and child-centred framework in order to support pupils at the year 6/7 transition phase and then to use this information to develop the process further.

**Why have I been chosen?**

You and your child have been selected/invited to take part in the research project because your child has been identified by school to be vulnerable at the Year 6/7 transition phase.

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

You will be invited to attend the meeting with school staff (and other professionals) to have a discussion around your child and thinking about ways to enable them to make a positive start in secondary school. You will be asked about the process of involvement, from start to finish, and about your views about the process. You will also be asked what, in your view, could improve the process in the future. This will be done through a semi-structured interview.
The interviews will be audio-recorded and will last approximately 30 minutes and would require you to make a time commitment of 30 minutes for the research.

The research project will involve interviewing your child at three set points:

1. Before the meetings happen.
2. After the meeting.
3. In the autumn term once they begin secondary school.

The interviews with your child will last approximately 30 minutes in duration and will be audio-recorded for the purposes of the research. Anonymous quotes may be used for the purposes of the research.

**What happens to the data collected?**

The information from the interviews will be analysed and then will be identified for any common ‘themes’ that may emerge from the data. All this information will then be fed back to the Local Authority for the project and will be used to improve the process further.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**

Confidentiality will be maintained, as all interviews recorded will be stored on a secure computer. Anonymity of participants will be ensured at all times, whereby no participant will be identified at any stage of the research project.

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

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

**Where will I be interviewed?**

You will be interviewed at the school or any other local community venue that is appropriate.

**Will the outcomes of the study be published?**

The study will be written up as part of a doctoral thesis and a brief report of the findings will be provided to the Educational Psychology Service.

It is very unlikely that this study will be prepared for an external research publication but it is important that you have been informed of this possibility to ensure that you are able to make a fully informed decision to participate in this study.

**Contact for further information**
If you wish to discuss any aspects of the research with myself please contact me (Miss Nadia Tabassum) or my supervisor (SSEP) on the contact information provided below:

Nadia Tabassum/ SSEP (Supervisor)
Educational Psychology Service Address

What if I have concerns?

Please contact myself or my supervisor to provide you with assistance during the research for any further help or advice.

Criminal Records Check

Miss Nadia Tabassum has undergone a Criminal Records Bureau check at the Enhanced Disclosure level.

If you are happy for your child and yourself to take part in this research project please complete and sign the attached consent form for yourself and your child and return to Miss Nadia Tabassum or to school.

Thank you,

Nadia Tabassum

(Trainee Educational Psychologist)
PARENT AND CHILD CONSENT FORM

If you are happy for yourself and your child to participate please complete and sign the consent form below.

I give consent for myself and my child to take part in the research (Please sign):

___________________________________________________

(Please tick the boxes as appropriate)

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

☐

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

☐

3. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.

☐

4. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.

☐

5. I agree for my child and myself to take part in the above project.

☐

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Name:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My child’s Name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child’s secondary school:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_______________________ _______________ ________________
Name of participant: Date: Signature:

_______________________ _______________ ________________
Name of person taking consent: Date: Signature:

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Pupil Information Sheet

Introduction
Hello! You are being invited to take part in telling us what your views are about the meetings that you have been involved in at school, which are about you. We want to know what you think and your views are very important to us.

Before you decide to take part it is important for you to understand why we are asking for your views. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish, like your family and school staff.

If there is anything you do not understand please ask Miss Tabassum, as she is there to help you. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will you be talking to and where?
Miss Tabassum is from the University of Manchester and will come into school to talk to you to ask you what you thought about the meetings that you were part of in school.

Why will you be asked to talk to Miss Tabassum?
We are interested in knowing about your views about the meetings that you had. We will then use this information to make the meetings even better in the future.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You will be asked to talk to Miss Tabassum about what you thought about the meetings that you were part of in school. What was good about them, what wasn’t so good about them? This information will help us to improve things in the future.

The interviews will be tape recorded and will last about one hour.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

If you want to take part in this study please fill in the consent form.

Questions?
If you have any questions that you want to ask you can ask Mr/s X at school or Miss Tabassum. Thank you.
**Pupil consent form**

If you would like to take part then please complete this form.

Please ✔️ each question.

1. I have read the information about the project and I understand it.

Yes ☐ No ☐

2. I understand that my parent/guardian will need to agree for me to take part if I am under 16 years old.

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. I understand that I have the choice not to take part in the project at any point.

Yes ☐ No ☐

4. I understand that everything I say will be kept private.

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. I agree to the information I have talked about to be shared as long as it is private and my name is kept private.

Yes ☐ No ☐

6. I agree to take part in the study and speak to Miss Tabassum.

Yes ☐ No ☐

___________ ______________________ ______________________
Name of pupil Date Signature

___________ ______________________ ______________________
Name of person taking consent Date Signature
APPENDIX E

The early intervention project

Professional’s Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a University research project being carried out in the borough in conjunction with School A, School B and the LA Educational Psychology Service. The project is interested in looking at early intervention to prevent exclusions when working in a multi-agency and pupil-centred framework and is interested in your views about your participation in the project in order to move it forward. This research project is also part of a student research project, which forms part of a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the study?

The study will be carried out by Miss Nadia Tabassum (Year 2 Trainee Educational Psychologist) from the University of Manchester, in partnership with School A, School B and LA Educational Psychology Service.

Title of the study

Using solution-focused pupil support meetings (SFPSMs) to support pupils identified as having social, emotional and, behavioural difficulties (SEBD): Early intervention at the Year 6/7 transition phase.

What is the aim of the study?

The main aim of the research is to look at participants’ views about the process of working in a multi-agency and child-centred framework in order to prevent exclusions and then to use this information to develop the process further.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are either involved in supporting one (or some) of the pupil’s the selected for this research project.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
You will be asked about the process of involvement, from start to finish, and about your views about the process. You will also be asked what, in your view, could improve the process in the future. This will be done through a semi-structured interview.

The interviews will be audio-recorded and will last approximately one hour and would require you to make a time commitment of one hour for the project.

**What happens to the data collected?**

The information from the interviews will be analysed and then will be identified for any common ‘themes’ that may emerge from the data. All this information will then be fed back to the LA, mainly the two high schools and will be used to improve the process of preventing exclusions.

**How is confidentiality maintained?**

Confidentiality will be maintained as all interviews recorded will be stored on a secure computer. The audio-tapes will be destroyed after five years. Anonymity of participants will be ensured at all times, whereby no participant will be identified at any stage of the research project. The data will be stored in line with the University of Manchester data protection and confidentiality guidelines.

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

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

**What is the duration of the interview?**

The duration of the interview is approximately 30 minutes.

**Where will I be interviewed?**

You will be interviewed at the school or any other local community venue that is appropriate.

**Will the outcomes of the study be published?**

The study will be written up as part of a doctoral thesis and a brief report of the findings will be provided to the LA Educational Psychology Service.

It is very unlikely that this study will be prepared for an external research publication but it is important that you have been informed of this possibility to ensure that you are able to make a fully informed decision to participate in this study.

**Contact for further information**
If you wish to discuss any aspects of the research with myself please contact me (Miss Nadia Tabassum) or my supervisor (SSEP) on the contact information provided below:

Nadia Tabassum/ SSEP
Educational Psychology Service Address

**What if I have concerns?**

Please contact myself or my supervisor to provide you with assistance during the study for any further help or advice.
PARTICIPANTS CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below:

(Please tick the boxes as appropriate)

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.

4. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

5. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.

I agree to take part in the above project.

__________________________  ________________  _______________________
Name of participant           Date                  Signature

__________________________  ________________  _______________________
Name of person taking consent Date                  Signature
APPENDIX F

Interview schedule for Professionals

1. How did you become involved in the project? What were your initial thoughts when you were contacted?
2. What information did you receive before and during your participation in the project?
3. What did the project entail?
4. What did you think about the process of the meeting and the framework that was used?
5. Tell me about your involvement in the meeting.
6. What do you think was good about the meetings? What helped/facilitated the meetings?
7. What do you think was not so good about the meetings? What were the barriers?
8. Thinking about the whole process, from the beginning to the end, what would you say were the good/bad things about it? (Facilitators/barriers).
9. What were your thoughts after the meeting?
10. How do you think the process and the meetings could be improved in the future?
11. Might you use these meetings again in the future? Do you feel you have sufficient training/experience of the process to take this forward on your own? If not, what else might you need?
12. What did you notice in terms of outcomes for the pupil?
13. Any comments?

Interview schedule for the Educational Psychologist

1. Tell me about this research project that you are involved in.
2. Where did the impetus for this project come from?
3. Tell me about your role in the development of this project.
4. What do you hope to achieve from this project?
5. How did you go about deciding who to select in the multi-agency meeting?
6. Which models were considered for the development of this project in order to inform the ‘intervention’?
7. Which model/approach was selected and why?
8. How do you think the SFBT/PCP approach was suited to each of the pupils you worked with?
9. How do you feel the schools were able to follow this model, or incorporate this way of working with the pupils?
10. Which aspects of the model worked effectively?
11. Which aspects of the model did not work effectively?
12. How flexible do you feel the model was in meeting the needs of a) pupils; b) parents; c) professionals?
13. Were you able to adapt the model to meet the needs of the participants (Pupils, schools, professionals)?
14. Was the model effective in meeting the training needs (if any) for the staff involved in the project?
15. What were the outcomes of the project?
16. Did you achieve what you set out to achieve? Was the model you used a ‘good fit’ of what you were trying to achieve?
17. How successful do you think the model has been?
18. Are there any refinements you would make based on your experience so far?
19. If this project/intervention was to take place again what do you perceive to be your role?
20. On a scale of 1-10 (1= low and 10 =extremely high) how do you feel your role was instrumental in the project? Why are you at number...? What would move it up to....?
21. What are your thoughts about the whole structure and process?

Interview schedule for Pupils

Pre-intervention

(Initial introduction to the project, thanks and initial rapport building i.e. which high school they are going to, SATs etc).

1. How did you get to know about the project? Who told you about it?
2. What did you think/feel when you got contacted to take part in the project?
3. Who got in touch with you about the project? What did they tell you about the project? What information did you receive?
4. What do you think is going to happen? How do you feel about that?
5. Is there anything else you would like to say about the project?

Post-intervention

1. Tell me about the meeting you had in school with everyone, what happened? Start from the beginning when you got asked to take part i.e. invite to participate, pre-meeting participation, post-meeting.
2. What did you think you would have to do?
3. What did you **actually** do?
4. Tell me how you felt the meeting went? What happened?
5. What do you think was good about the meetings? What helped?
6. What do you think was not so good about the meeting (s)?
7. What do you think was **good** about the whole process from start to finish?
8. What do you think was **not so good** about the whole process from start to finish?
9. What do you think could be done to make things better for next time?
10. Is there anything else you would like to say about the project?

Follow-up

1. How have things been since you have had the meeting(s)?
2. Have things changed for you? What has happened?
3. Tell me about the things that have changed that were good?
4. Tell me about things that have changed for you that are not so good?
5. If you were to have the meeting(s) again what would you change about them?
6. What would you do differently? What should be done differently?
7. Which things did you notice about the process from start to finish?
8. What can be done about the meeting(s) to make them better for next time?
9. Is there anything else you would like to say about the project?
APPENDIX G

Case Study Protocol (as suggested by Yin, 2009)

1. An overview of the case study project- this is provided in the aims of the project and the rationale in Section 1.1 and the design of the study is provided in Section 3.5.

The aim of the project was to prevent exclusion at the early intervention stage through identifying pupils with SEBD who were ‘at risk’ of exclusion at the Year 6/7 transition phase, which was achieved through the criteria developed from the multi-agency steering group meetings. An exploratory multiple case study design was used, with an aim to include all the key individuals in the lives of the CYP identified to take part in the research i.e. school professional, a key worker (from any profession) and a parent, with the SSEP providing an overview of the research.

2. Field procedures (Data Collection)- see Sections 3.6-3.7 to get an overview of how data was collected and from whom.

The data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews, which were recorded to be later transcribed by the researcher. Each pupil was interviewed at the pre/post and follow-up stage of the SFPSM (interviewed three times). All the adults were interviewed after the pupil had been interviewed at the follow-up stage.

3. Case study questions- see Section 3.3 for the research questions used in the research.

The research aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How is the SFPSM intervention process perceived by all participants involved?

RQ2: How do participants perceive SFPSMs could work successfully in the future?

RQ3: How does the Educational Psychologist perceive her role in developing the SFPSMs approach?

4. A guide for the case study report- see Section 4 and Section 5. This is essentially based upon the guidelines by the University of Manchester for the submission of the thesis.
Appendix H

Ethics Approval Application - CONFIRMATION for Medium Risk

Ethics (ethics.education@manchester.ac.uk)

13/06/2012

To: Nadiatabassum39@hotmail.com
Cc: Caroline Bond

Dear Nadia,

Ref: PGR-5457920-A1

I am pleased to confirm that your ethics application has been approved by the School Research Integrity Committee (RIC) against a pre-approved UREC template.

Apologies for the delay in getting this confirmation sent out to you

If anything untoward happens during your research then please ensure you make your supervisor aware who can then raise it with the RIC on your behalf

Regards

Gail Divall

PGT & Quality Assurance Administrator

School of Education

Tel: +44(0)161 275 3390

Working Week: Tues - Fri

http://www.education.manchester.ac.uk

http://www.education.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/
Appendix I

Phase 1 - Familiarising yourself with the data

Phase 2 - Generating initial codes

Phase 3 - Searching for themes
Phase 4 - Reviewing themes

Phase 5 - Defining and naming themes
## APPENDIX J

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Case Study One</th>
<th>Case Study Two</th>
<th>Case Study Three</th>
<th>EP Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Information/ communication about the project/meeting. Sub themes = Positive Perceptions and Negative Perceptions.</td>
<td>1. Information about the project.</td>
<td>1. Practical Aspects of the meeting/project. Sub-themes = Negative, Positive and Areas for Change.</td>
<td>1. School attitude towards the SFPSMs. Sub-themes = Positive and Negative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Involvement of [other] adults in the meeting(s). Sub-themes = Positive Perceptions and Negative Perceptions.</td>
<td>4. Understanding and expectations about the meeting/project. Sub-themes = Pupil and Staff.</td>
<td>4. Positive view about the meeting.</td>
<td>4. Solution-focused approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Future Directions. Sub-themes = For Pupil and For</td>
<td>5. Solution-Focused.</td>
<td>5. [Lack of] Pupil Involvement.</td>
<td>5. Enhancement of communication and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School.</td>
<td>participation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Positive school/parental, communication, engagement and support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Supportive Factors. *</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 42. Overall themes from across all the case studies and the EP perspective.

*The themes that are highlighted in **green** are those themes that have been generated by the pupil participant within that particular case study (Case Study Three, themes 2 and 3) and the themes that have been highlighted in **blue** are those themes that have been generated by the school professionals within that particular case study (Case Study Two, themes 9 and 10).
Appendix K

‘Proposed Model’ for using the SFPSMs in the future

Step 1: Identification of participating schools (primary and secondary). This will include things like looking at the context of the school, school policies, involvement of the Senior Leadership Team and identification of a key facilitator/lead to facilitate the SFPSMs.

Step 2: SSEP/ EPS to provide training on the underpinning use of PCP approaches and the SFPSM process and format.

Step 3: Use the ‘criteria’ checklist (which needs re-finining) to identify pupils to take part in using the SFPSMs. One potential checklist that could be used to support this step is the 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents (12-18) (Search Institute).

Step 4: Use baseline measures (SDQ, Emotional Needs Audit) for pupils identified.

Step 5: Identify the key individual to be the key worker (KW) for the identified pupil.

Step 6: SSEP to prepare and provide training to the KW.

Step 7: KW pre-SFPSM preparation with pupils using the hand out.

Step 8: SFPSM to take place.

Step 9: Use baseline measures once the pupil has started secondary school (in the autumn term) and again in the spring term, as is appropriate.