The use of an adapted version of the Dependency Grid to investigate social support for young people in care

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Abstract

Social support is strongly associated with resilience and positive outcomes in children who have experienced risk and adversity, including children and young people in care. However, research suggests that children in care are often disadvantaged in their ability to benefit from social support due to disrupted relationships and multiple placements. Whilst a number of measures have been developed to assess the support networks of children, few are able to adequately assess and describe the complex network of relationships that exist for young people in care.

The aim of this exploratory study was to investigate the use of a Dependency Grid to assess social support in young people who are looked after. The Dependency Grid is an interview technique derived from George Kelly’s (1955) Theory of Personal Constructs and was administered to ten individuals aged 11-17 years who were either in foster care or residential care. Qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis were used to explore its utility to assess social support with each case. The appropriateness and ease of completing the Dependency Grid was evaluated through participant feedback interviews. The views and opinions of the young people’s social workers and a reference group consisting of social care practitioners were also obtained.

The Dependency Grid was found to be a useful tool for examining the support networks of young people in care, with many advantages over existing measures. The Dependency Grid revealed similarities and differences in the way participants distributed their dependencies. Most of the participants had dispersed dependency grids and carers and friends were the most significant providers of support. Levels of social support did not vary with the increasing size of the support network (r = 0.198) and the felt ‘closeness’ of relationships, as measured using the Four Field Map, was poorly related to the allocation of dependencies (r = -0.243). Some evidence was found in relation to the validity of the Dependency Grid for individual cases using qualitative methods. The strengths and limitations of the Dependency Grid are discussed and the methodological challenges with the study and opportunities for further research are considered.
DECLARATION

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I am extremely grateful to the young people who gave up their time to participate in this study and for sharing information about themselves and their relationships. I would also like to thank the teachers, social workers and foster carers who helped with the recruitment of participants and for providing a venue for the interviews.

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Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Lisa, for shouldering so much of the parenting duties so that I could concentrate on my studies.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Lisa and our two boys, Owen and Toby.
THE AUTHOR

I, Martin Powell, am a registered psychologist practitioner with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). I am a Chartered Psychologist and an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society (AfBPSS). I am also a member of the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP).

I have a BSc. (Hons) degree in Psychology (University of Hull 1993), a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (University of Leicester, 1994) and a M.Sc. in Educational Psychology (University of Manchester 1999). I enrolled on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at the University of Manchester in 2007, by part time study, and submit this thesis in part fulfillment of this degree.

I am employed as a Senior Child and Educational Psychologist in the North West of England. My role includes deputising for the Principal Child and Educational Psychologist and the management of a team of five child and educational psychologists who provide a service to Children’s Social Care. I have developed a wide and detailed knowledge of the needs of children who are in care or on the edge of care, and children who are placed for adoption. I sit on various panels and working groups, including the Local Authority’s Adoption Panel, Education and Placement Panel for Looked After Children, and Safeguarding Policy and Practice Group. I am also a member of the Local Authority’s Multiagency safeguarding training pool.
SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS WORK

This thesis is the fourth component of the taught doctoral programme. The abstracts from my previous three assignments are presented below:

I. Is Personal Construct Psychology Effective with Children and Adolescents with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Problems?

There is a growing body of empirical evidence which demonstrates the effectiveness of Personal Construct Psychotherapy with adult populations and group based interventions with adolescents. The aim of this study was to consider the evidence base for therapeutic interventions using Personal Construct Psychology with individual children and adolescents who present with social, emotional and behavioural problems. This review found that the available pool of studies involving children and young people is limited. Eleven case studies were selected according to set criteria and were analysed in relation to the research questions for this review. The review found that the evidence for Personal Construct Psychology with children and young people is based largely on children aged 10 years and over, and in the majority of cases the children were male, presenting with externalising behaviours. There was a lack of objective outcome measures employed by the studies and an over-reliance on subjective reports from children and adults, which is critically discussed. The review considers the role of educational psychologists in developing an evidence base for this approach, as part of an expansion of therapeutic services in support of the current mental health agenda for children and young people.
2. **A Survey of the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children looked after by a Local Authority.**

There is mounting evidence that suggests that children who are looked after by local authorities are at greater risk of developing mental health problems than children in the general population. Local authorities are now charged with the responsibility of screening looked after children using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (1997), which has been approved as a performance indicator for the emotional wellbeing of children in local authority care. This study is an analysis of the data collected from the parent and carer version of the SDQ that was completed on 181 children and young people aged 4 to 16 years who had been living in continuous care for one year. The questionnaire results were statistically analysed together with additional data about children’s special educational needs, placement, legal status and CAMHS involvement. The study found that children in the survey had significantly higher rates of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) compared to children in the general population but they had lower levels of disturbance compared with a large sample of looked after children in England. Older boys were more likely to have SEBD than older girls or younger boys, and children with SEBD were also likely to have special educational needs. There were higher rates of SEBD among children living in group care settings compared to those in family settings and children who were accommodated had more adjustment difficulties than children on care orders. The study discusses the findings and their implications for improving the psychological well-being of looked after children.
3. **The Use of the Dependency Grid to Investigate the Relationships of Young People in Care.**

Three young people in local authority care aged between 11 and 15-years-old were interviewed about their relationships using a Dependency Grid (Kelly, 1955), a measure derived from Personal Construct Theory to investigate people’s use of social support. The grid data was analysed using GRIDSTAT5 (Bell, 2009) and the findings were consistent with Kelly’s theory that children are reliant on a few individuals to meet their needs. The three young people were found to differ in the extent to which they relied upon themselves and were dependent on parents and carers. The implications of these findings is discussed and the usefulness of the Dependency Grid for understanding young people’s relationships is considered.
1. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The aim of this study is to investigate the use of the Dependency Grid, a psychological interview technique derived from Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955), as a measure of social support in young people in care.

1.1 Termininology

Children in public care are children and young people under 18 years-of-age who are in the care of the local authority where the Children Act 1989 applies. The term 'looked after' was introduced by the Children Act 1989 and refers to children who are subject to care orders and those who are voluntarily accommodated with the agreement of parents. The terms looked-after children (LAC), children and young people in public care, and children and young people in care will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

The term ‘young people’ will be used in this study to refer to participants aged between 11 to 18 years.

1.2 Background

In March 2011 there were over 83,000 children in public care in the UK, with 65,520 children in the care of local authorities in England (Department for Education, 2011). Government statistics indicate that the numbers of children in care and the number of care proceedings has increased since the death of baby Peter Connelly (Cafcass, 2012).

According to the most recent government statistics, the majority of children (60%) in the care system are looked after under a Care Order (either Interim or Full Care Order) and a third (31%) are in care under a voluntary agreement (Section 20). Most children are cared for by foster carers (74%) and a small number are cared for in residential homes (10%). The rest are
cared for in a number of different settings, including residential schools or with birth parents (Department for Education, 2011).

The statistics reveal that children become looked after for a variety of reasons, including child/parent disability, death of a parent or illness, and family dysfunction, but the majority are admitted to care because of abuse (physical, emotional or sexual) or neglect (54%) (Department for Education, 2011). A small percentage of children and young people become looked after due to their own extreme behaviour, which parents are unable to manage and which places the young person and others at significant risk of harm.

Negative pre-care experiences (e.g. abuse, separation and disrupted relationships) combined with the challenges of being in care (stigma of being looked after, instability of care and school placements) are frequently seen as contributory factors for the poor developmental outcomes of children in care compared with their peers. Since 2000 there have been a series of government led strategies involving policy, target setting and targeted funding to improve outcomes for looked after children (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2003, 2009; Department for Education and Skills, 2007; National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, 2010), however, the gap between children in care and the general population has persisted.

1.3 Improving Outcomes for Looked After Children

The evidence of ‘what works’ to improve outcomes for LAC is limited. A lot of research is descriptive, focusing on localised populations, with few replications (Institute of Public Care, 2008). A clear message from the literature is that the needs of LAC are complex and that there are no simple solutions (Institute of Public Care, 2008).
Among the many factors that are linked to positive outcomes for LAC and the general population is the presence of close, supportive relationships. Though most research and practice has focused on the concept of attachment and the nature of children’s attachment relationships to parents and carers, it has been argued that a much wider, contextual view of children’s relationships is needed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1999, 2005; Darling, 2007).

The contribution of social support to people’s physical and mental wellbeing is widely accepted by a number of different academic disciplines (e.g. sociology, psychology, economics, biology and medical science). Indeed, it is listed as one of the five evidenced based factors identified by the UK Government’s Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing, which drew on the inter-disciplinary work of over 400 scientists across the world (Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project, 2008).

Given the significance of social support on wellbeing, it is surprising that few studies have examined the support networks of young people in care. Indeed, it is hard to find any other group of children who experience the same level of disruption to their support networks.
1.4 Current context

The assessment of children in care and those on the edge of care is guided by The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health/ Department For Education and Employment, 2000). This was introduced in the wake of the death of Victoria Climbe, with the aim of improving assessments and decision-making.

The assessment framework places great importance on the assessment of the family’s support network and its impact on the child and family’s functioning:

> [Practitioners must] Identify the support networks and support systems used by the child and family ……[and identify the] strengths and weaknesses of family and support networks (Adcock, 2001, p.81)

The assessment framework was accompanied by questionnaires and scales to aid the assessment process but there was no measure of social support included in these support materials. The document does refer to the ecomap and genogram in its appendix but, strictly speaking, these techniques measure the structure and composition of the social network rather than social support. This distinction will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

1.5 Role of Educational Psychologists (EPs)

Educational psychologists (EPs) have had an increasing role in the provision of support and services for children in local authority care. Most psychologists are involved in some capacity with LAC as they are over represented in the special needs system (Jackson & McParlin, 2006) and feature in the generic case work of most EPs. In some cases, the introduction of Children’s Services has led to a closer alignment of
educational psychology services with children’s social care (e.g. Fallon, Woods, & Rooney, 2010; Rees, 2006) and an increasing number of educational psychology services have created specialist roles, with EPs providing input to fostering and adoption panels, consultation, training and assessments (Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP), 2006; Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires, & O'Connor, 2006; Norwich, Richards, & Nash, 2010; Osborne, Norgate, & Traill, 2009).

The development of educational psychology services for looked after children has been welcomed. For instance, Osborne and Alfano (2011) found that carers valued the input from EPs, and Sinclair (2008) reported that educational psychology and counselling were the only external forms of intervention that have been found to positively influence placement outcomes for children in care.

The Assessment Framework document also acknowledged the important contribution of EPs in delivering and advising on treatment and intervention for children’s care and behaviour (Department of Health/ Department For Education and Employment, 2000 section 5.43). This view is echoed by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (July 2012).

Given the importance of relationships on young people’s development, a key area for assessment by psychologists is the child or young person’s relationship with family members and significant others. However, very few standardised measures exist for assessing children’s perceptions of relationships. The measure that is in most common use is The Bene Anthony Family Relations Test (Bene & Anthony, 1957). However, despite being widely used with looked after children, it has never been normed on this population and its validity and reliability has been called into question:
…the items in the test are heterogeneous, arbitrarily defined, and not categorized according to a definable schema, and the validity and reliability of the BAFRT are in doubt.’ (Parkin, 2001, p. 342)

A major limitation of the test, so far as this thesis is concerned, is that it only considers relationships within the family and so ignores the impact of children’s wider relationships on their development (Parkin, 2001). Consequently, the test is not suitable for investigating the relationships of young people in care, where relationships outside the birth family are significant by virtue of the fact that they are being cared for by substitute carers.

1.5 Personal interest

The research builds on my professional interests and previous academic work in the area of Personal Construct Theory and the mental health of looked after children (Powell, 2010). I have had a long standing interest in Personal Construct Theory and have attended relevant training from experienced practitioners, including Tom Ravenette (Ravenette, 1999) and Steve Clarke (Clarke, 1999). I am also a member of the PCP mailing list hosted by jiscmail, and I’ve delivered training to social workers on PCP and its methods.

I am employed as a senior child and educational psychologist and I lead a specialist team of six EPs (1.3fte) who provide a service to Children’s Social Care. Improving outcomes for LAC is the main focus of the team and it is recognised that relationships between young people and their carers play a significant part in this.
1.6 The current research

In the literature review I will argue that there is a lack of appropriate measures for assessing the social support networks of children, and most measures are inadequate for use with children in care.

Drawing on the work of George Kelly (1955) and his theory of personal constructs, this study will explore the development and use of the Dependency Grid, a structured interview technique that will be used to investigate dependency relationships and social support in a group of young people in care. The study will consider how the Dependency Grid might contribute to our understanding of young people's needs and relationships, and will examine the different methods used to analyse dependency grids.

It is argued that understanding how young people in care perceive and make use of social support is important for identifying areas of vulnerability and for informing professionals about how best to intervene to improve relationships and so develop a young person’s resilience.

Following a review of the literature the following research aims and objectives will be presented:

**Research Aims and Objectives**

1. To determine if the Dependency Grid is an appropriate tool for assessing the support networks of young people in care, with particular reference to its ability to identify meaningful patterns in young people’s relationships:

   a. Relationship with birth family, carers, friends and others.
   b. Who people depend on most? Who is depended on the least?
c. Whether a person lacks support or has a highly integrated network of supportive relationships

d. Whether a person is overly self-reliant

2. To develop the best method(s) for analysing the Dependency Grid data, in terms of ease of analysis and ability to provide a meaningful interpretation of the individual’s results.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter has provided a rationale and purpose for the study and concluded with a statement of the aims of this thesis.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature on risk, resilience and social support, with a particular focus on children in care. It considers the conceptual and methodological difficulties associated with the measurement of social support, leading to a review of some current measures. The chapter will then introduce Personal Construct Theory as the theoretical base for the Dependency Grid. The literature review will then discuss existing research on the use of the Dependency Grid before restating the aims of the research.

Chapter 3 Provides justification of the research methodology and details the procedures used to assess the use of the Dependency Grid.

Chapter 4 reports on the qualitative and quantitative findings from the Dependency Grid using a series of case studies to illustrate its utility. The chapter presents the views of young people, social workers and a group of social care professionals on the usability and face validity of the Dependency Grid and concludes with an analysis of patterns in the data across the individuals.
Chapter 5 presents the main findings and reflects upon them in relation to the research aims and objectives. The limitations of the research are discussed and the unique contribution that this research makes to knowledge and theory is detailed. The chapter will consider the implications for practice and will conclude with suggestions for future research.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review will begin with a discussion of the literature concerning the vulnerabilities of children in care. The literature review will then consider the research on resilience, with a particular focus on the contribution of relationships and social support to young people in care. The review will consider the complexities of defining and measuring social support before discussing the literature on Personal Construct Theory and the application of the Dependency Grid as a measure of social support and help-seeking with young people in local authority care. Finally, the literature review will conclude with a rationale for the current study and a statement of the research aims.

2.2 Risk and Adversity for Children and Young People in Local Authority Care

The social (and environmental) determinants of poor psychological adjustment in children are widely recognised. Such adverse influences include poor parenting, family dysfunction, neglect and maltreatment, exposure to violence, parental drug misuse and mental health problems, social isolation, school problems, and separation and loss of significant relationships (Dent & Cameron, 2003; Gilligan, 2009).

It is the accumulation of these ‘risk factors’ which poses a significant threat to children’s health and wellbeing (Rutter, 1990). This is acutely evident for children and young people who become ‘looked after’ (LAC) by local authorities. The majority of children who become looked after do so after exposure to negative life events and adversity (Department for Education, 2011). Unsurprisingly, many develop internalising (e.g. anxiety or
depression) and/or externalising (e.g. aggressive or antisocial) problems that are exacerbated by their experience of care.

Becoming looked-after presents a whole new set of challenges for children. Local authority care leads to the child’s separation from their natural sources of support, which include parents, siblings and extended family members. In some cases it might mean relocation to a new geographical area, a change of school and loss of contact with friends, teachers and other significant adults; and at the same time, children are expected to enter into a new relationship with substitute carers.

Although attempts are made to match children to their carers, this is more of an art form than a science and is often limited by the skills and qualities of available carers (Street & Davies, 1999; Walker, 2008). Access to good quality care, positive relationships and support networks has great benefits to children’s psychological health and well-being (Edmond, Auslander, Elze, & Bowland, 2006; Flynn, Ghazal, Legault, Vandermeulen, & Petrick, 2004). Unfortunately, for many children the experience of care is one of frequent change and disruption, which can have complex effects on children’s development. Placement disruption can:

‘shatter the fragile trust that children have in the permanence of adult relationships, resurrect memories they have of earlier separations and encourage emotional disturbance and learned indifference’ (Berridge & Cleaver, 1987, p. 5).

Whilst some placement changes may be planned, a high percentage of moves are unplanned, and are usually related to the child’s difficult and challenging behaviour, particularly among older children and adolescents (Rowe, Hundleby, & Garnett, 1989; Ward & Skuse, 2001; Wilson, 2006). However, placement disruption itself is found to be both a consequence and a cause of behavioural problems, with those children who have experienced
the greatest number of moves exhibiting the most troublesome behaviours (Minnis & Devine, 2001, 2001; Newton, Litrownik, & Landsverk, 2000; Oosterman, Schuengel, Slot, Bullen, & Dorelijers, 2007; Ward, 1995). Even when children do not change placements, they may be affected by the departure of others (Holmstrom, 1999; Skuse & Ward, 2003).

The child’s journey through the care system ends with their transition into independence, usually at the age of 18. They exit from care less skilled and equipped to cope with the challenges of adulthood than many of their peers, and without the support of birth family or the option of returning to care in times of difficulty (Dixon & Stein, 2005). Many aspects of the young person’s health worsens in the year after leaving care and there is an increase in drug and alcohol misuse, teenage pregnancy, and mental health problems (Dixon, 2008). A third of young people leave care without education, employment or training, (Department for Education, 2011), which means that their life chances are greatly reduced and they are disadvantaged in their ability to draw from a diverse range of support, opportunities and experiences that are important to their mental health and well-being.

2.3 Mental Health of Looked After Children

The exposure to multiple risk factors and difficult circumstances naturally takes its toll on the psychological resources of LAC. A consistent finding in the literature is that LAC have poorer outcomes on a range of social, educational and health indices than the general population. For instance, LAC are more likely to under-achieve in education and are at increased risk of social exclusion (Jackson & Sachdev, 2001; Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Statistical data shows that the offending rates, rates of teenage pregnancy, and drug misuse among LAC are higher than for children in the general population (Department for Education and Skills, 2006), and LAC are four
times more likely to be unemployed and 60 times more likely to be sent to prison (UK Joint Working Party on Foster Care, 1999).

LAC are found to be at greater risk of developing mental health problems and poor psychological adjustment compared with their peers (McAuley & Young, 2006; McCann, James, Wilson, & Dunn, 1996; Meltzer, Gatward, Corbin, Goodman, & Ford, 2003). In the largest survey to date, Meltzer and his colleagues (2003) investigated the mental health needs of children in 134 local authorities in England. The researchers employed the same methodology that had been used in their study of the mental health needs of children in the general population (Meltzer, Gatward, Corbin, Goodman, & Ford, 2000). Meltzer et al., (2003) found that 45% of LAC had a mental health problem compared with only 10% of the children in the general population. The most common mental health problem for all children was conduct disorder but looked after children were seven times more likely to have a conduct disorder than children in the general population. As in previous studies, Meltzer et al. (2003) found higher rates of mental health problems among those in residential care compared to those living in family environments, either with members of their birth family or with foster carers.

Meltzer, et al., (2003) findings were based on a sample of 1,039 looked after children in England. Although it is one of the largest surveys of children in care it only represents 1.7% of the population of children in care (there were approximately 60,000 children in the looked after system in England (Meltzer, Gatward, Corbin, Goodman, & Ford, 2003). Secondly, the data from the general population which served as comparison group was not based on current data but on a survey of children completed some three to four years earlier (Meltzer, et al., 2000). Nevertheless, similar prevalence rates to the English study have been reported by the same research team in surveys of LAC in Wales (49% with a disorder) and Scotland (45% with a disorder) (Meltzer, et al., 2003; Meltzer, Lader, Corbin, Goodman, & Ford, 2004a, 2004b). Also, Government statistics continue to highlight the significant needs of the LAC population. The latest figures from the annual
screening of LAC by local authorities in England using the Strengths and difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997), suggests that boys had greater difficulties than girls, and the proportion of children with mental health needs was higher among older children (12 years plus) than younger children (Department for Education, 2012). I found a similar pattern in my own investigation of the mental health needs of LAC in a local authority in England (Powell, 2009).

As has been shown, most of the research on the mental health needs of LAC has been conducted from a medical or clinical perspective. This has resulted in the ‘medicalisation’ of difficulties, using psychiatric labels which detract from the psychosocial causes for their difficulties. The risk is that the difficulties become defined and located as ‘within child’ problems, and are construed as being less amenable to intervention.

2.4 Resilience

While negative experiences, such as abuse and family dysfunction are related to psychological difficulties, this is far from a simple cause and effect relationship. The main findings from studies such as Meltzer et al. (2003; 2004a, 2004b) obscure the fact that there are some children who appear to adapt and recover from negative life events and adversity (Rees, 2012). Indeed, little attention is given to this group, which constitutes more than 50% of Meltzer et al’s (2003) sample. Resilience is the term attributed to individuals who appear to cope, recover and generally do well against the odds. Gilligan (1997) refers to the concept of resilience as:

*Those qualities which cushion a vulnerable child from the worst effects of adversity in whatsoever form it takes and which may help a child or young person to cope, survive and even thrive in the face of great hurt and disadvantage (Gilligan, 1997, p. 12)*
Resilience does not refer to some magical or special characteristic inherent in some children but is regarded as a normative process of flourishing under favourable conditions. It involves the complex interplay of personal characteristics (both nature and nurture) and external family and environmental factors (Masten, 2001). Thus, resilience or vulnerability is determined by the number and chronicity of risk factors on the one hand and the number of assets the individual possesses on the other (Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008).

Protective factors can loosely be defined as factors that mitigate against the negative impact of risk factors (Kim-Cohen, 2007). These include personal assets, such as intelligence, good social skills, and an easy temperament; and family and environmental assets, such as good parenting and a supportive school. A consistent and reliable finding in the literature is the protective and beneficial effects of supportive relationships.

2.5 Attachment Theory

A secure attachment with at least one adult has been identified as a significant protective factor found in resilient children (Rutter, 1994). According to Attachment theory, infants are biologically predisposed to form attachment relationships to enable them to experience security and comfort. The infant develops a range of attachment behaviours that are triggered in times of stress, which aim to keep their carer close so that they have a secure base (Bowlby, 1982, 1988).

The security of attachment is seen as crucial in fostering social competence, trust, the ability to regulate emotions, and self reflective abilities, which may be crucial in managing and coping with adverse life events and difficulties (Target & Fonagy, 2000). Conversely, disruption to these early bonds, as a result of abuse, neglect, separation and loss, can have serious implications
for a child’s personality development, mental health, and the development of later relationships (Bowlby, 1982; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Golding, 2008).

Ainsworth et al., (1978) is credited with identifying different attachment styles based on the different ways children adapt their care-eliciting behaviour to suit their particular circumstances. For instance, when an attachment figure is insensitive, neglectful, rejecting or even frightening, an insecure attachment is developed. Under these conditions, the child is unable to rely on their caregiver to make the child feel safe and secure when they are feeling anxious. As a consequence, children learn to behave in ways that maximise (ambivalent-resistant attachment) or minimise (avoidant attachment) attachment behaviour (Ainsworth et al. (1978). A disorganised pattern of attachment has been identified in children who have experienced their caregivers as frightening. These children are unable to organise their behaviour at times of stress to elicit emotional support.

For children have been placed with substitute carers in local authority care, there is the possibility of forming new attachments to foster carers and residential carers who may assist in the development of more positive models of relationships and promote the psychological development of the young person. Achieving this is far from easy as one of the criticisms of attachment theory is that it is difficult to translate the theory into effective guidance or interventions to promote secure attachment relationships (Allen, 2011). From a resilience perspective, the focus on young people’s relationships with key adults ignores the significance of the child’s wider relationships and social ties that appear to play a significant role in their adjustment. This is particularly relevant when considering young people in care, who despite having insecure attachments to their parents, have shown resilience under these challenging circumstances.

From a developmental perspective, the attachment relationship may exert the greatest influence on the development of young children, but for older children, the social network has been shown to have a significant influence
on the adjustment of children who have been exposed to risk and maltreatment (Bolger, Patterson, & Kupersmidt, 1998; Taussig, 2002).

2.6 Social Support

Social support is a familiar term to most people but like resilience, it is a complex, multifaceted concept that has proved difficult to define and measure (Barrera, 1986; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990; Tardy, 1985). The literature makes the distinction between a person’s social network and social support. The social network is commonly referred to as the people who play some active part in the person’s life and is usually measured quantitatively. Social support refers to the provision of help and support by members of the social network, and is often assessed using qualitative methods. Though not exclusive, the supportive resources that are provided within the context of these interpersonal relationships include, practical assistance, advice, empathic listening, physical comfort and reassurance (Tardy, 1985).

Social support is part of what Gilligan (2006) refers to as the ‘healing’ power of ordinary experiences:

*Help comes in many forms, it doesn’t just come in white coats or by formal appointment. Therapy does not occur only in clinical settings. Just as everyday life provides the physiotherapy that people may need when striving to recover normal physical functioning after serious injuries and operations, so everyday life often contains many opportunities for psychotherapy for children striving to recover normal psychological functioning after serious trauma and hurt (Gilligan, 2004, p. 27).*
There is substantial empirical evidence that has been gathered over the past thirty years which points to the positive effects of social support on the physical health and mental wellbeing of adults (Brown & Harris, 1978; Kessler & McLeod, 1985), and there is increasing evidence which finds that social support has a significant effect on the development and wellbeing of children and adolescents (Dubow, Tisak, Causey, Hryshko, & Reid, 1991; Gilligan, 2009; Kahn & Antonucci, 1980).

Social support, especially informal support, is frequently cited by children as one of the most important factors in helping them to cope with difficult circumstances (Alexander, 2002; Health, 2008) and assessing the availability of social support is considered good practice in the assessment of depression in children and young people (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2005).

A number of quantitative studies, mainly in the U.S, have reported on the positive effects of social support on vulnerable children in 'at risk' families and children who have experienced abuse and maltreatment (e.g. Salazar, Keller, & Courtney, 2011). For instance, Thompson et al., (2007) found that mental health problems were more prevalent among children and families where social support was low, and a number of retrospective studies have reported evidence of the mediating role of social support and coping strategies between child abuse and later adjustment (e.g. Pepin & Banyard, 2006; Runtz & Schallow, 1997), including physical abuse (Ezzell, Swenson, & Brondino, 2000); and sexual abuse (Conte & Schuermann, 1987). There is, however, a dearth of longitudinal studies that have investigated this effect. Also, the relationship between abuse, social support and mental health is based largely on studies of the general population rather than children in care (Salazar, et al., 2011), and whilst family based support is considered to be significant (Rutter, 1987; Salazar, Keller, & Courtney, 2011), this element is missing from the lives of many children who become looked after.
2.7 **Theoretical basis of social support**

The mechanisms through which social support influences mental and physical health are complex and are not yet fully understood:

> ‘As is the case with psychotherapy, we know that social support “works”. What we don’t know is the nature of the mechanisms involved and the factors that moderate its effectiveness’ (Sarason & Sarason, 2009, p. 120).

Two main theoretical models have been proposed which seek to explain the relationship between social support and physical and mental health: the direct-effect hypothesis and the buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The direct-effect (also known as the main effect model) model assumes that social support, which is defined as social embeddedness or social integration, has a beneficial effect on wellbeing irrespective of whether the person is under stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The stress-buffering model hypothesises that social support acts as a buffer to protect individuals from the harmful effects of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). The buffering effect can operate in two different ways: firstly it can influence the way we appraise a situation so that we come to see it as less stressful. Secondly, social support provides a person with the necessary resources that enable them to cope or weather stressful events. Empirical support for the direct effect hypothesis and buffering hypothesis is mixed and may be due, to differences in the way social support is conceptualised and measured (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Ruger, Malecki, & Demaray, 2010).
2.8 The Social Support Networks of Children and Young People

Studies that have examined the structure and function of children’s support networks suggest that children’s networks and use of specific supports vary according to gender, culture, age and development.

Research confirms that parents are an important source of social support, particularly for young children, as they are more dependent on adult care and have fewer social connections outside the immediate family. The literature suggests that the parent-child relationship remains significant throughout the school years and into adolescence but peer relationships become increasingly influential from middle childhood onwards (Dolan & McGrath, 2006; Ghate & Hazel, 2002).

Research has shown that children’s support networks expand between the ages of 6 and 9 years of age as their social circles widen (Feiring & Lewis, 1991a, 1991b). Levitt, Guacci-Franco, & Levitt (1993) found that children’s social networks expanded for a second time during adolescence to include a growing network of friendship groups. Interestingly, Levitt et al (1993) found that adolescent relationships with extended family members decreased in significance during adolescence, with many of the functions provided by extended family members being replaced by friends. This pattern occurred across gender and ethnic groups, although extended family members were more significant for some ethnic groups than others (Levitt, et al., 1993). Other studies have reported similar findings (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Garnefski & Diekstra, 1996). An interesting phenomenon is that fathers show the greatest decline in significance during adolescence than any other relationship, including the maternal relationship (Calarossi & Eccles, 2003; Levitt, Silver, & Santos, 2007).

The importance of the peer group during adolescence is well established in the psychological literature. Friends are thought to be important for identity
formation, socialization and the development of independence and autonomy (McMahon & Curtin, 2012). Adolescents come to learn about the social world through their interactions with their peer group. This is perhaps evident in the composition of children’s social networks, as studies have found that there is a greater number of same sex friends in the social networks of boys and girls (Tietjen, 1982). Research also suggests that there are qualitative differences between boys’ and girls’ relationships which may be relevant to mental health. For instance, Samuelson (1997) found that close relationships for girls was correlated with positive outcomes (fewer feelings of loneliness) but this was not the case for boys. Simply belonging to a peer group was more significant to boys than closeness (Belle, 1989).

What is clear from these studies is that social networks are not static, but are reconfigured during childhood, and presumably over an individual’s lifetime. Significant changes to an individual’s social network are thought to be the result of transitions and developmental phases or changes in circumstance e.g. transitions between primary and secondary schools and from school to work or college and university. The individual is also likely to play an active role in constructing and shaping the support network according to their changing needs and personal characteristics. This invokes the concept of attachment, which was discussed earlier. Indeed, it has been suggested that the formation, use and satisfaction of social support may depend on the individual’s attachment style, as attachment and social support are dependent on beliefs about the availability of significant others (Blain, Whiffen, & Thompson, 1993; Fiori, Consendine, & Merz, 2011; Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983; Stein, 2006).

A small number of studies have investigated the effects of network disruption on children. For instance, Samuelsson and Samuelsson (1997) found that children in single parent families had more behaviour problems and were less satisfied with their support networks than children in the general population. Similarly, Sturgess, Dunn and Davies (2001) found that
children in reconstituted families showed greater behavioural disturbance when they felt less close to their birth fathers and step fathers. The researchers were careful to warn of the directional effects of the findings, as it is quite possible that the children’s behavioural difficulties were the cause of poorer relationships with birth fathers and step fathers rather than a consequence. Unfortunately, the children’s relationship with stepmothers was not considered in the study due to limited numbers.

2.9 Social Support Networks and Looked After Children

A large body of research exists that has considered the significance of specific relationships for looked after children (LAC) (e.g. birth family, carers, siblings and friends), but there are relatively few studies that have examined the support network as a whole. Most research on social support for LAC has focused on the outcome of support supplied to carers rather than direct support to children; with most studies reporting positive findings in terms of placement stability and increased retention of carers (e.g. Appleyard, Egeland, & Sroufe, 2007; Sinclair, Wilson, & Gibbs, 2000). The few studies that have directly investigated the support networks of young people in care have focused primarily on care leavers, in recognition of their relative vulnerability as they move into independence. For instance, Stein and Munro (2008) state that care leavers are expected to become independent at a younger age than their peers and have to cope with the transition to independence in a much shorter time and with less support. The transition into independence is often accompanied by a loss of support from carers and professionals at a time when young people most need it. Research suggests that outcomes are poorer for young people who have low levels of perceived social support whilst in care, as the natural weakening and loss of ties on leaving care is more detrimental to this group than those with high levels of support (Stein, 2006; Stein & Munro, 2008; Won, 2009). Stein (2006) also suggests that some care leavers have greater difficulty using other people’s help, which puts them at a
disadvantage when they are trying to make their way in the world as young adults.

Won (2009) and Stein’s (2006) findings highlight the need to develop good assessment measures which can be used to assess whether a young person has adequate support and, perhaps more importantly, is able to make use of the support that is available to them. Such information may prove useful in helping to improve the support given to those who are currently in care and those who have transitioned from care.

As previously discussed, LAC suffer greater disruption to their support networks than those with non-care experiences, and they often find themselves straddling two distinct sets of relationships or family ties in terms of their birth family and foster family or peer and carer relationships in residential care.

A number of studies have found that foster carers are a valuable source of support for children in care. A strong relationship with foster carers and residential carers is found to be a good indicator of a successful placement and is associated with long term positive outcomes for children (Clough, Bullock, & Ward, 2006; Drapeau, Saint-Jaques, Lepine, & Bernard, 2007; Gilligan, 2005; Sinclair, 2005; Stanley, 2007; Stein & Munro, 2008). The evidence also demonstrates that children who are enabled to maintain and develop contact with their birth family are likely to have better outcomes than those who do not (Berridge & Cleaver, 1987; Parker, 1988). This includes contact with siblings and grandparents (Berridge & Cleaver, 1987; Gilligan, 2012; Hegar, 2005).

A small number of international studies have investigated the support networks of LAC but cross-country differences in the nature of the care populations, thresholds, and care practices make it difficult to generalise the findings to the UK. For instance, a higher proportion of young people are looked after in some European countries than the UK and there are cross-
country variations in the use of foster care and residential care (Boddy, 2008; Stein & Munro, 2008). Existing studies also differ in the way social support is defined, measured and evaluated. Most have adopted a quantitative approach to examine young people’s relationships and its impact on well-being. Few studies have analysed the social network of children in terms of the provision of support from different providers and in different contexts.

In a quantitative study, Lewis (1999) compared a sample of twenty four adolescents in foster care with a control group using measures of adjustment, social support and attachment. The in-care group had significantly lower scores on measures of attachment and social support in relation to their birth parents but their attachments and social support ratings to foster carers were similar to the comparison group’s ratings of birth parents. Lewis concluded that the adolescents in foster care were more attached to their foster carers than their parents, and perceived more social support from their foster family than their birth family. Contrary to expectations, Lewis (1999) found that the groups did not differ in their attachments and social support to peers. Although the two groups differed in terms of adjustment, with the adolescents in foster care exhibiting greater problems with behaviour, the study failed to find a significant relationship between attachment, social support and adjustment, which Lewis attributed to the small sample size.

In the U.S, Perry (2006) used telephone interviews to investigate the support networks of 167 adolescents aged 15-18 years of age. As found in Lewis’s study (1999), Perry (2006) reported that most children had close and supportive relationships with their carers and peers, and weak relationships with their biological families. The relationship with biological parents was poorer among those in residential care than foster care and the stability of the placement was related to the child-carer relationship. For instance, adolescents in more stable environments, especially those provided by kinship carers, reported positive relationships which were equal
to those living with biological parents, and rates of depression were comparable to the general population. In contrast, adolescents in less stable placements, including residential homes, reported that caregivers were less caring.

Unfortunately, Perry (2006) and Lewis (1999) failed to consider the role and impact of wider relationships in children’s lives, particularly siblings, extended family members and professional support (e.g. teachers and social workers). Also, the value of different relationships was judged in terms of intimacy and closeness, which ignores the range of supportive functions that are provided by different relationships in a person’s social network. Indeed, an interesting finding from Perry’s (2006) research is that the combined strength of the relationship with the foster carer and parent had a positive effect on symptoms of depression and anxiety but neither was significant by itself. Perry (2006) concluded that multiple network strength may be important for improving wellbeing and that some relationships may be irreplaceable because of their differential functions. If this is the case, it highlights the need for appropriate measures that can be used to analyse the different supportive functions provided by individuals within the social network.

Siqueira, Spath, Dell’Aglio, & Koller (2011), investigated the support networks and adjustment of 155 Spanish children in residential care aged between 7 to 16 years. Siqueira et al found that the children in residential care had larger support networks than a comparison group consisting of 142 children from low income families in ‘at risk’ communities. Using validated wellbeing measures (The Multidimensional Life Satisfaction Scale, Giacomoni, 2002; the Stressful Life Events, Kristensen, Leon, D’Incao, & Dell’Aglio, 2004; and the Five Field Map, Samuelsson, Thernlund & Ringstrom, 1996), Siqueira et al., (2011) found that children in care had significantly higher rates of stressful life events than children from at risk families but no difference was found between the two groups on a measure of life satisfaction. Siqueira et al., (2011) attributed this finding to the effects
of social support and more favourable home conditions for children in care compared to those living with their families. Logistic regression analysis revealed that stressful life events, social support and family conflict contributed significantly to predicting life satisfaction, but social support was the strongest predictor.

One criticism of Siqueira et al’s study is that social support was measured exclusively in terms of the network size and emotional closeness. Again, it ignores the range of provisions that are met by individuals within the support network. Of course, this information is often harder to achieve in quantitative studies with large samples.

One of the largest investigations of social support among children in care was completed in Brazil by Bravo & Del Valle (2003). These researchers compared a sample of 384 adolescents in care with a control group consisting of 882 children who were living at home with their families. The participants were interviewed using a specially designed questionnaire: the Social Support Networks Questionnaire. This was used to obtain a list of people the children were living with, as well as people drawn from school and the community. The support supplied by these different individuals was assessed by asking the respondent to rate the dependability and use of their supports on a three point scale representing the categories of ‘never’ ‘sometimes’ and ‘always’. The Social Support Networks Questionnaire included a third question which asked the respondents about how they would feel if they lost each relationship.

Consistent with other research, Bravo & Del Valle (2003) found that the support networks of children in residential care were significantly larger than the control group (p <0.05). However, this difference may be artificial as the questionnaire asked respondents to list the people they lived with rather than the people who were important to them. Naturally, those children living in residential settings had larger networks than the comparison group.
When the data was adjusted the researchers found that the in-care group had a more constricted network in comparison with the control group.

Bravo and del Valle (2003) found the adolescents in care had significantly lower total scores on the provision of support dimension than the control group (p < 0.05). The researchers concluded that the young people in care felt less supported than the control group, despite having a larger network of potential helpers. This finding is consistent with other research on the relationship between network size and perceived support (Sarason, et al., 1990).

Bravo and del Valle (2003) found that the young people in care did not discriminate between different relationships when sharing their problems, whereas the control group were more selective. Both groups relied on their mothers and friends for support rather than their fathers, which has been found with children in the general population (Calarossi & Eccles, 2003; Levitt, et al., 2007). The adolescents in care felt less supported by their mothers and fathers but it is not clear if levels of contact was a factor.

The loss of the maternal relationship was more significant for children living with their families than the in-care group but the potential loss of extended family members was more significant to the in-care group than those living with their families. This suggests that that multiple ties may be more important to children in care than those living with their families.

McMahon and Curtin (2012) used the Social Provisions Scale (Dolan, 2005) and the Social Network Map (Tracy & Whittaker, 1990) to investigate the social support networks of twenty one (13-17 year-old) Irish adolescents in care and seventeen care leavers (aged 18-21 years-old). Consistent with previous findings, the study found that the left-care group had a smaller network (12.5) than the in-care group (15.5). Foster carers and friends were the main providers of practical, emotional and informational support for both the in-care group and the left-care group, and both groups rated these
relationships as ‘very close’. However, friends were the greatest source of support for the left-care group, especially in the provision of emotional support. One limitation of McMahon and Curtin’s study comes from the use of the Social Provisions Scale to measure the support provided by the support network. The Social Provisions Scale does not assess the support provided by individuals but support provided by different domains or relationships within the network, such as parents, carers and friends. Therefore, it is unable to differentiate between individuals in terms of the provision of support.

The supportive role of friends was considered by Anderton (2009) in an unpublished clinical psychology thesis. Using a narrative approach, Anderton (2009) interviewed seven teenagers in local authority care about their peer relationships. Like McMahon and Curtis (2012), friends were found to be an important source of emotional support for the young people in care, and were especially important to those with less positive parental relationships. However, Anderton found that peer relationships were affected by placement disruption and the degree of interpersonal skill of the young person. The problem with Anderton’s (2009) study is that it focuses exclusively on peer relationships, and the small sample and qualitative methodology make it difficult to generalise the findings. The study also fails to explore in any depth the nature of support provided by peers and it relies on the participant’s memory of events, which is not always reliable.

In a small, qualitative, practitioner-led research project on behalf of the Children’s Workforce Council, Bailey (2009) investigated the support networks of six adolescents aged 13 to 16 years old who were in long-term voluntary care (Section 20) in England. The interviewees completed a network map and were then interviewed about help-seeking behaviour using three vignettes to assess the provision of three types of support (affective, instrumental and affirming support).
Bailey (2009) found that the participants had a wide range of helpers that they could depend on, including family, carers, and teachers, but their closest relationships were with their birth parents (although some struggled to account for the closeness of this relationship). This finding contradicts the results of other studies presented in this thesis and may reflect differences in measurement and/or the nature and characteristics of Bailey’s sample. For instance, young people in voluntary care are likely to have a different relationship with their parents than children who are in care under a Care Order. As they are accommodated on a voluntary basis, they face fewer restrictions on contact with their birth family than those on a Care Order.

Bailey (2009) found that the four young people in foster care had a closer relationship with their carers than the two young people in residential care. This pattern has also been found in other research and has been attributed to the particular needs of the child and the nature of the care environment. For instance, in the UK, children who are placed in residential care tend to be older and often have higher level needs, which in addition to their strong ties with birth family, means that they find it more difficult to accept a new family environment. Furthermore, their exposure to multiple carers and changing shift patterns can often make it more difficult for them to form emotional ties with residential care staff (Triseliotis, 1989).

Bailey (2009) reported that sibling relationships were significant to the young people in care, even when they were separated from them; and the closeness of the relationship was unaffected by whether or not the relationship was positive or not. This is echoed by other research which has found that older siblings are more significant for some children, especially when they take on a ‘quasi-parental role’ (Wade, 2006).

Bailey’s (2009) study found that the importance of grandparents and other extended family members varied among the participants in the sample, as did teachers. Teachers were cited as an important source of instrumental
support for three young people in the sample, which illustrates the importance of education in the lives of young people in care. The small sample size and the focus on young people in voluntary care limits the generalisability of Bailey’s findings and it is not clear whether the range of supportive functions provided by different relationships can be adequately captured using only three questions or vignettes.

A more sophisticated method of assessing the social support networks of young people in care was devised and tested by Schlosser (1996) as part of her doctoral thesis in clinical psychology. Schlosser compared a group of fifty adolescents in foster care and residential care with a comparison group (n=100). Schlosser (1996) found that the in-care groups had larger support networks than the comparison group and their networks contained more formal and fewer intimate providers compared to the comparison group.

The young people in care mentioned their carers as sources of support less frequently than the non-care group mentioned their parents, which was thought to be an indication of the inability of foster and residential carers to fill the gap of parental support. However, the study did find that a small proportion of young people experienced a supportive and fulfilling relationship with their carers, which does suggest that for some young people it is possible to replace the parental relationship with a meaningful emotional tie with another adult.

Friends were found to be important providers of emotional support to the in-care groups and the comparison group, but the in-care groups were less reliant on their friends for emotional support. Schlosser also found differences in the quality of the friendships between males and females. Female friendships were affiliative and focused on trust and emotional support, whereas male friendships were more clearly defined in terms of practical support.
Statistical analyses revealed marked differences in reported sources of support, with young people in care mentioning more numerous, and more different sources, while the young people in the comparison group consistently mentioned members of their affiliative network (e.g. parents and friends).

Schlosser (1996) developed and tested her own measure of social support to assess the study’s aims: the Social Support Measure for Adolescents (SSMA). It is worth discussing the SSMA in some detail as the content and procedure is similar to the Dependency Grid, which is the focus of the present study. Like the Dependency Grid, the SSMA is a measure of perceived support. It consists of twenty seven vignettes that are designed to measure help-seeking in response to emotional and practical needs (e.g. love, trust, reassurance, acceptance, conflict, tangible support, empathy and information). Unlike many of the existing measures, the SSMA is useful in detailing the support that the young person can access from individual network members. However, the SSMA confuses the direction of support so that some questions relate to support received by the respondent and others refer to help or a response given by the the respondent to another. For instance:

1. If you won one million pounds tomorrow, who would you buy a present for?

The SSMA also includes questions that do not appear to be concerned with social support or are tenuously linked:

2. It’s a miracle: the person you like least has disappeared and nobody knows where they have gone. You’re relieved! Who is this person

The use of vignettes avoids ambiguity in the way the individual interprets the situation but the level of specificity can be a problem if it is perceived as irrelevant to the respondent. For instance, one item asked respondents who
they would tell if they fell pregnant or got a girl pregnant, which makes assumptions about the sexual orientation of the respondents. A final criticism of the SSMA is that it does not allow respondents to consider their own efforts in managing problem situations, as the expectation is that the person will always seek help for each situation.

2.10 Summary

With the exception of a few academic theses, very little research has been published in the UK on the social support networks of young people in care. A number of international studies have been considered but it is difficult to make cross-country comparisons due to differences in the nature of the samples and in the way social support is defined and measured in each country. For instance, in the U.K and other European countries, foster care is the dominant strategy for providing care, whereas the vast majority of children in care in Brazil are in residential settings (foster care only became an option to children in 1987) (del Valle, Bravo, & Lopez, 2009).

The next section will examine some of the conceptual and methodological difficulties associated with the measurement of social support.
2.11 Measuring Social Support

2.11.1 Conceptual and Methodological Issues

The lack of consensus as to how to define and operationalise the concept of social support has led to the development of numerous instruments that purport to measure the construct (Barrera, 2000; Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb, 2000; Tardy, 1985). Several reviews have commented on the poor relationship between existing measures and their dislocation from theory (e.g. Sarason & Sarason, 2009; Tardy, 1985). The psychometric properties of published measures have also been questioned and there has been criticism of the use of select samples in the development of these instruments (e.g. college students).

As has already been stated, social support is a multidimensional construct and social support measures can differ on a number of dimensions (see below).

2.11.2 Function versus structure

Social support measures can often be distinguished by whether they assess the structure and composition of a person’s support network or whether they report on the provision of support. The former is usually considered in objective and quantifiable terms (e.g. the size of the network, the number of direct and indirect contacts and the nature of the exchanges), whereas the latter is concerned with the types of help that are given and received and is usually measured qualitatively (Hawkins & Maurer, 2012).

The structure and composition of the network can provide information on the number of social and emotional ties a person has, the number of different roles they serve and the extent to which the individual is integrated into a community of people (social embeddedness). However, assessing the structure and composition of an individual’s support network is far from straightforward. The researcher must decide whether to ask the
respondents to report on the most important people in their life or to list the people they are in frequent contact with. Some measures ask the respondent to generate a list of names to provide a complete picture of the person’s support network, whereas others seek a representation of network members defined by role title (i.e. the respondent is asked to suggest two important people for a given role). The latter is a cheaper and simpler strategy but it cannot provide an estimation of the network size or detailed information about individual members of the support network. The ability of a measure to focus on individual sources of support can be an advantage as significant others can be a source of stress as well as a source of comfort and support, and the relationship could well be a factor affecting the person’s wellbeing (e.g. Rook, 1990).

2.11.3 Perceived versus enacted support

The measurement of perceived versus enacted support is an important consideration for researchers and practitioners, as research suggests that the two are poorly related (Barrera, 1986; Lakey & Drew, 1997). Despite concerns about the potential bias of self-report methods, perceived social support is most strongly associated with well-being than the reality (Sarason, et al., 1990). This highlights the significance of psychological factors over the physical availability of a supportive network (Blain, et al., 1993). Measures of perceived social support may differ in whether they measure an individual’s appraisal of the availability of support or the adequacy of support.
2.11.4 Content or function of social support

As previously discussed, the relationship between wellbeing and social support may partly depend on the extent to which the support provided matches the need of the individual (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; Cutrona & Russell, 1990). It therefore makes sense to distinguish between different types of support. The provision of help by supporters has been defined and categorised in a number of different ways in the literature, but in general they are all subcategories of emotional and practical support (Barrera & Ainley, 1983). The functions most often cited in the literature are based on the categories offered by House (1981). These are:

- Emotional support (love, affection, trust and empathy)
- Instrumental support (the provision of goods and resources, such as money)
- Informational support (e.g. advice)
- Appraisal support (evaluative or affirmative feedback on acts or ideas).

Although useful, these categories are far from discrete, as most supportive acts have an emotional component. Also, appraisal support may usefully be considered as a form of emotional support.

2.12 Evaluating social support measures

Power, Champion and Aris (1988) offer a set of criteria for evaluating whether an instrument is a 'good' measure of social support:

1. The scale should be capable of showing which significant relationships do and do not exist and what type of support is provided in a particular relationship.
2. The functions should be divided into general categories of emotional vs practical support.
3. The measure should provide data on the under provision and over provision of specific types of support.
4. The measure should provide information about the quality of the current relationships in terms of whether the support available is perceived as adequate or not.
5. The measure should measure perceived support rather than received support.

Power, Champion and Aris (1988) argue that most existing measures fail to meet one or more of these standards.

### 2.13 Measures of Social Support

It is not within the scope of this thesis to provide a review of existing social support measures. For this, the reader should refer to Malecki and Demaray (2002) and Tardy (1985). It is suffice to say that there is an abundance of adult measures that purport to measure social support but relatively few measures exist for use with children and adolescents (Malecki & Demaray, 2002).

Several measures have been evaluated in order to establish their psychometric properties, however, while internal consistency scores appear to be high, the correlations between different social support measures is low, which reflects the broad differences in the way social support is defined, conceptualised and measured (Norbeck, 1984; Weinert, 1984).

Most social support measures were developed on U.S populations and typically include white, middle class students. Few measures incorporate both a structural and functional component of social support and most instruments are inappropriate for use with children and young people in care.
as they assume that parents are involved in the child’s daily care and they cannot easily be adapted to capture the child’s unique set of relationships.

2.13.1 Clinical Measures

It is worth considering the main rivals to the Dependency Grid - the tool that is the focus of this study. These clinical measures include the Ecomap (Hartman, 1978), the Five Field Map (Samuelsson, et al., 1996) and the Social Network Map (Tracy & Whittaker, 1990).

2.13.1.1 Ecomap (Hartman, 1978)

The ecomap is a commonly used technique within social work practice (Hartman, 1978; Rempel, Neufeld, & Kushner, 2007; Tracy & Whittaker, 1990) and is a visual representation of an individual’s support network using different shapes, lines and colours to denote variations in the nature and quality of relationships. Because it is a visual assessment tool, it is suitable for use with children (Curry, Fazio-Griffith, & Rohr, 2008). However, whilst it is a good measure of network structure and composition, it does not provide information on network function (Tracy & Whittaker, 1990). There is also a lack of shared meaning for the symbols used to describe relationships, which can make it difficult to compare one person’s results with another.
2.13.1.2 The Five Field Map (Samuelsson, et al., 1996)

The Five Field Map, like the Eco Map, is not strictly an instrument for measuring social support but rather a measure of the social network.

The Five Field Map visually records the emotional closeness of relationships to the child or young person by their position on a map which consists of a series of concentric circles. The map provides a measure of the degree of closeness of the relationship to the respondent, who is at the centre of the diagram. The Five Field Map has been used in a number of studies to investigate the support networks of children. One strength of the measure is its visual display of key relationships, which means that it is easily understood by young children. In terms of face validity, it appears to be a useful tool for investigating network composition and emotional ties but it does not provide information on the nature and types of support provided by individual members of the child’s social network.

2.13.1.3 The Social Network Map (Tracy & Whittaker, 1990)

The Social Network Map is an assessment tool that combines a segmented circular map for displaying network members according to their relationship with the respondent (e.g. friends, neighbours, household, other family), with a grid for recording the provision of support provided by various helpers. Follow-up interview questions are used to sort and group network members into three piles representing the degree of felt ‘closeness’ or frequency of help-seeking behaviour (i.e. hardly ever, sometimes, almost always). The type of support provided by network members is also investigated using three vignettes representing specific types of help: concrete support, emotional support, and advice.

The Social Network Map was developed for use with adults but could easily be developed for use with adolescents. A limitation of this approach is its
reliance on three key questions to identify the types of support provided by each person in the network, as it is unlikely that a single question or item can adequately represent the range of behaviours that typify a given category of support.

2.14 A New Measure of Social Support: Personal Construct Theory and the Dependency Grid

George Kelly’s Theory of Personal Constructs (1955), also referred to as personal construct psychology (PCP), serves as the theoretical base for the present study.

PCP is most often described as a personality theory but some regard it as a theory of social psychology (Walker, 1993; Walker & Winter, 2007). PCP and its methods have been usefully applied to the study of adult relationships, including friendships, marital relationships, work relationships and therapeutic relationships (e.g. Duck, 1972; Gold Hall, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1991; Mendoza, 1985; Neimeyer & Hudson, 1985; Ryle, 1985; Walker, 1993). In the area of social care, it has been used to investigate successful outcomes in foster care, and the relationship between children and their carers (Cooper, 2011; Poleka, 1980). PCP approaches have also been used to investigate the self concept of looked after children and their educational outcomes (Coulling, 2000; Hicks & Nixon, 1989), and PCP has been applied to the professional development and practice of social workers (Borrell, Espwall, Pryce and Brenner, 2003; Browning, 2003; Gould, 1991).

PCP focuses on subjective experience and as such, the theory and its methods are concerned with how the world is perceived or construed by the individual (Burr, King, & Butt, 2012). Kelly proposed that people organise their experiences by developing a system of bipolar personal constructs that are finite in number. These meaningful units are used by the individual to discriminate and define what something is and what it is not. For instance, we understand the concept of ‘good’ against its contrast (or opposite pole)
with 'bad' and vice versa. By construing events in this oppositional way, people are able to make a choice and anticipate and predict what may or may not happen in their daily encounters with people, objects and situations. Kelly suggested that personal constructs are organised in a hierarchical system, with constructs that are concerned with the person’s personal identity and values located at the top of the structure (Core constructs), and more concrete, subordinate constructs subsumed below.

A central tenet of the theory is the metaphor of the person as a scientist, who is actively engaged in producing theories about how the world works through a process of validation and invalidation of personal theories. The ultimate aim is to make increasingly accurate predictions about people, objects and events (elements) so that the individual can operate more effectively in the world. The concept of the person as a scientist is closely linked to Kelly’s (1955) philosophy of constructive alternativism. Kelly suggested that there are an infinite number of ways of seeing and understanding the world, and like scientists, our theories and hypotheses are open to revision as we accumulate new evidence.

Personal Construct Theory fits well with the optimistic stance of resilience and positive psychology due to its rejection of determinism and its emphasis on the potential for human growth and change. A person’s construct system is not a fixed entity but is instead open to revision and change. Dalton and Dunnett (1992) offer the analogy of a scaffolder who continually makes changes to the scaffold structure so that it fits better and is able to extend and cover new areas of experience.
2.15 Kelly’s Theory of Dependency

Walker (1993) gives credit to Kelly for recognising the benefits of social support long before there was an established empirical research base. In some ways Kelly’s ideas are an antithesis to the traditional westernised view of the importance of independence in adulthood. For Kelly, adulthood is marked by an increase in dependency rather than independence, as unlike a child whose needs are met primarily by their caregivers, the challenge in adulthood is to find people who are willing and able to meet our individual needs from within an everchanging network of support.

‘For the most part, adults are highly dependent upon a complex society made up of many people. They also grow up to be dependent upon possessions, resources, and services which are of no particular concern to a child........An adult wants more things. He roams farther afield to get them. He seeks them from more people. He taps a wider range of resources. He develops role relationships in order to distribute his dependencies. He seeks to satisfy one need here and another there. He discriminates between his dependencies and then disperses them appropriately. Thus, with respect to any one person, he is indeed more independent than he was with respect to his parent when he was a child. But, taking all his interpersonal relationships into account, he has a wide range of dependencies as well as resources for meeting them.’ (Kelly, 1955, pp. 249-250).

Kelly’s theory of dependency was outlined in the second volume of The Theory of Personal Constructs but has remained a relatively obscure part of the theory. Walker (1990) and Beail and Beail (1985) have suggested that its significance has been greatly underestimated by Kelly and his followers.
Kelly saw dispersed dependency as the hallmark of a resilient person, as they have learned to differentiate their support needs instead of ‘placing all their eggs in one basket’. In contrast, people who are reliant on a few people to meet all their needs are described as having undispersed dependencies. This is a vulnerable position for the individual as they have very few people to call on in times of need (Walker, 1997, 2005).

Dependency constructs are fundamental to the process of the dispersion of dependencies. Kelly (1955) defined dependency constructs as those that are concerned with the individual’s basic needs and which associate other people with these needs:

‘Dependency constructs collect both persons and a particular kind of event under the same rubric. The are not role constructs, as we have defined role; but they do, in a measure, govern interpersonal relations. They are probably put to use by the child long before he is able to do the subsuming which is an essential feature of role construction. Normally they are greatly modified as one develops the acumen and insight into the reactions of others which make role playing possible. They are not easy to verbalize.’ (Kelly, 1955, p. 79).

These dependency constructs are the first kind of discriminations made by infants and are built from the child’s daily interactions with others. They are formed at a prelinguistic stage in the child’s development and exist at a preverbal level (Walker, 1993). Kelly suggested that dependency constructs mature during childhood to produce a more sophisticated construct system. This becomes possible as the child’s early dependency constructs become more permeable so that the child is able to consider other people as helpful sources of support in addition to their main caregivers:
‘...he sees himself as having only one mother who can supply him with food, only one father who can provide shelter, or, at most, only one family upon which he can depend. As he grows older he finds other sources of food and shelter. His dependency constructs become more permeable. He can allow himself to be dependent upon other people too. And he is more and more discriminating in his allocation of dependencies. He depends on one person for one thing and upon another for another.’ (Kelly, 1955, p. 79)

The young child’s constructs are also preemptive and become less so, as the child progresses into adulthood. In other words, the child pigeonholes other people in terms of their role, such as mother or father, but slowly comes to construe them on other dimensions as the construct system develops. Kelly saw this as an important step towards the individual ceasing to be wholly dependent on one person and developing dependency on others. Kelly suggests that the impermeability and preemptive nature of a child’s dependency constructs means that it is harder for them to replace their caregiver. This of course has implications for LAC.

Kelly’s concepts of Sociality and Role Relationships are also significant for the dispersion of dependency. Walker (1990) argues that the construer needs to be attuned to what the other is prepared to give, so that they can adjust their demands accordingly:

‘The demands placed on others by the urgent, insistent, all-embracing, undispersed dependency construing system are considered by the others to be excessive, so that the effectively functioning individual learns to moderate these, thereby modifying their roles.’ (Walker, 1990, p. 45).

Walker (1990) speculates that the ability to construe the constructions of others is a necessary precondition for the development of the individual’s
construct system, since it provides the ideal conditions for the individual to elaborate and test out their theories through a process of validation and invalidation. Indeed, a Personal Construct approach to therapy is concerned with creating a safe environment in which people can experiment and test out their theories with a therapist. Kelly pointed to the loose thinking of people diagnosed with schizophrenia to illustrate how social isolation reduces people’s validatory and invalidatory experiences and its effects on the person’s construct system. According to Kelly, it is not the lack of social opportunities that is the problem but how the person interprets and makes use of their experience so that they produce more accurate predictions. Thus, an infant with few social opportunities may not be disadvantaged if they are able to make effective use of their caregiver as a validator of experience.

The role of the caregiver in shaping a child’s constructs has been further developed in a paper by Sassaroli and Lorenzini (1992). In what can be described as a reinterpretation of attachment from a personal construct perspective, the authors suggest that the purpose of attachment is to optimize a child’s predictive abilities by using the adult as a safe base for exploration and a source of information. In the elaboration of their theory, Sassaroli and Lorenzini (1992) suggest that the three main attachment types identified by Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth, et al., 1978) can be defined according to the predictive strategies adopted by children based on their care experiences. Sassaroli and Lorenzini (1992) argue that the primary objective of attachment is to develop the individual’s predictive abilities rather than achieve emotional security, although it can be said that the two may be related. The evidence for their ideas is based on their clinical work with agoraphobics (Lorenzini & Sassaroli, 1987; Sassaroli, Lorenzini, & Ruggiero, 2005) but the proposed differences in predictive styles has yet to be shown to apply to parent-child relationships in non-clinical populations.
2.16 The Dependency Grid

One method for exploring the subjective ways in which people make sense of their dependencies or support networks is the Situational Resources Repertory Test, which is now more commonly known as the Dependency Grid.

The Dependency Grid is a variation of the Repertory Grid, which is a method for investigating the personal constructs a person uses in relation to particular phenomenon. Like the Repertory Grid, the Dependency Grid is effectively a sorting task which allows the individual to reveal something about the way he or she perceives and orders the world (Fransella, Bell, & Bannister, 2004).

The Dependency Grid is a matrix which is used to record who, from among a network of supportive relationships, an individual would turn to for a set of problems (see figure 1). A completed grid is used to discover the complexity of an individual’s network of support, helping to identify whether the individual has few people they can rely on or a wide range of support, and whether they turn to the person who is best equipped to meet a particular need or are indiscriminate in their help-seeking behaviour. Kelly believed that these different patterns of relating and depending on others can be traced to the different ways in which the person construes themselves and other people (Kelly, 1955; Walker, 1993, 2005).
Figure 1 Example of a Dependency Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The time when you...</th>
<th>SELF</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Brother</th>
<th>Aunt</th>
<th>Friend</th>
<th>Grandmother</th>
<th>Doctor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Perplexed about what kind of job or vocation to go into</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Difficulty with the opposite sex</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Had some bad luck</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Hard up financially</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Had period of sickness</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Had serious trouble with your parents</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Essentially, the respondent completes the grid by making discriminations between helpers and situations. These can be made explicit by asking the respondent to contrast those from whom they would seek help from for a given situation with those they would not (Beail & Beail, 1985). This approach can also be used to investigate specific helpers by asking people to explain why a given helper is used for some problems and not others (Walker, 1997, 2005).

Although we may learn something about the way an individual discriminates between helpers and situations, the actual reasons or meanings behind the preferences may be unclear. Beail and Beail (1985) recommended the use of Hinkle’s (1965) laddering procedure to elicit superordinate constructs governing their dispersion of dependency. This line of questioning invites the individual to explain why a construct is preferred or important to them. For instance, why it is important for them to seek help from people who are genuine as opposed to people who are false. The other common technique in Personal Construct Theory, that of pyramiding (Landfield, 1971) can also
be used to access subordinate constructs by asking for details about a construct and its constrasting pole (Beail & Beail, 1985).

2.16.1 Variations in the Design of Kelly’s Dependency Grid

Kelly (1955) used the Dependency Grid in his counselling work to determine who a person would turn to for help from a list of current and past supporters when they faced a particular problem in their lives. Fransella and Bannister (1977) suggest that the Dependency Grid can be completed hypothetically to discover who a person might turn to for help if a problem was to occur. Similarly, Talbot et al., (1991) suggest that for certain clinical and research questions it might be more important to know who a person would turn to for help in the current context.

The Dependency Grid has traditionally been used to collect binary data, indicating whether a helper is used (1) or not (0). Beail and Beail (1985) suggest the use of a rating scale to rank order the resources (helpers) people would use for each situation.

Hinkle (cited in Fransella & Bannister, 1977) suggests that the Dependency Grid can be used to explore who turns to the client for support and for what sort of situations, which has become known as a Helping grid. Although it may be useful for investigating social exchange, research with a student sample found that the provision and receipt of support may not be equal. For instance, Whittingham (1990) found that male and female students depended on others to a lesser degree than others depended on them.

In another variation of the original method, Brinckley (1992) cited in Walker (1997) demonstrated the use of an Ideal Dependency Grid (referred to as a Being Helped grid) in which respondents completed a grid according to how they would like to be helped.
One final development in the design of the Dependency Grid is Walker’s (1997) suggestion for the inclusion of positive situations. Traditionally, Dependency Grids have focused exclusively on help seeking with problem situations but Walker (1997) argues that people’s psychological well-being also includes the ‘sharing of the good times’ as well as bad.

2.16.2 Methods of Analysis

Grids can be analysed in a variety of ways ranging from visual analysis and descriptive statistics to sophisticated statistical analyses, involving computer statistical programs, such as GRIDSTAT5 (Bell, 2009) and SPSS (SPSS Inc, 2008).

Walker (1997) provides a list of summary measures which can be used to analyse the Dependency Grid data:

- Total dependency - the number of marks in the grid
- Number of resources - number of columns (network size)
- Average number of dependencies per resource - the total number of dependencies in each grid divided by the number of resources
- Number of problem situations
- Average number of dependencies per problem situation - the total number of dependencies in each grid divided by the number of problems included.
- Available grid size - number of resources multiplied by the number of situations
- Utilized grid size - portion of available grid size that was taken up by the actual grid size
The Dispersion of Dependency

Since the dispersion of dependency is central to Kelly’s (1955) theory, researchers have been keen to find ways of measuring the patterns in dependency grids. One statistical method for analysing data in dependency grids was described by Walker, Ramsay and Bell (1988). The Dispersion of Dependency Index (DDI) is based on a statistic developed by Smith and Grassle (1977) for use in the biological sciences to measure and compare species diversity across different areas. The DDI is a commonly used statistic for investigating individual and group differences in dependency grids, however, one of the problems with the DDI is that its value is affected by the sample size and number of resources, which means that it is not always possible to compare the DDI from different studies (Bell, 2001; Walker, 1997).

Uncertainty Index

An alternative index for measuring dispersion of dependency is the Uncertainty Index (Bell, 2001). The Uncertainty Index assesses the relationship between situations and helpers (resources) and reports this on a scale between zero and one. According to Bell (2001), when the dependency is undispersed, the Uncertainty Index will be zero, as there is no uncertainty in the allocation of dependencies because all situations will be associated with one particular helper. However, when all helpers or resources are used equally, the Uncertainty Index will be 1.0, since any helper could be used for any situation. The great advantage of the Uncertainty Index over the DDI is that it is unaffected by the sample size, and it provides a standardised index for comparing dispersion across a number of grids (Bell, 2001).

The Uncertainty Index, like the DDI, can help to distinguish between undispersed and dispersed grids but they are unable to distinguish between
a healthy dispersion and a dilated undifferentiated grid. The latter occurs when an individual is indiscriminate in their help-seeking behaviour, calling on anyone and everyone for a given problem, regardless of whether the helper is able and willing to provide support for the problem. The literature refers to this pattern as a sign of immaturity or lack of sophisticated construing (e.g. Walker, 2005).

**Uncertainty Coefficient**

Bell (2001, 2009) described an additional statistic to the Uncertainty Index, known as the Uncertainty Coefficient, which is capable of distinguishing between a ‘healthy’ dispersed grid and an ‘unhealthy’ dilated undifferentiated grid. The Uncertainty Coefficient is an index of the relationship between two nominal variables, in this case, situations and resources, and is reported in symmetric and asymmetric forms. Thus, a constricted grid could be detected by the asymmetric coefficient, as one score would be high and the other very low. Furthermore, if the Uncertainty Coefficient is low for symmetric and asymmetric forms, it suggests a poor relationship between situations and resources, which may be a reflection of indiscriminate help-seeking.

**Partial Order Scalogram Analysis by Coordinates**

Bell, Winter and Bhandari (2010) outlined a method for examining the hierarchical structures in dependency grid data using a technique devised by Shye (1985) known as partial order scalogram analysis by coordinates (POSAC). POSAC is described as a form of ordinal factor analysis (Raveh & Landau, 1993). It has previously been used in research to study crime patterns and potential leaders among offenders based on criminal behaviour patterns (Porter & Alison, 2006; Raveh & Landau, 1993), and has been shown to reveal the superordinate and subordinate relationships based on
data from a dependency grid (Bell, Winter and Bhandari, 2010). POSAC takes the binary data that makes up the different profiles of helpers and orders them according to their total scores. For instance, a profile of 11101 is greater than a profile of 10000. POSAC also takes into account qualitative differences in profiles that have a similar total score, for instance 11101 has the same total score of 4 but is qualitatively different from 01111. POSAC compares and orders each helper’s profile in terms of the number of situations each helper is available for and the degree of similarity or comparability. It then assigns two scores for each helper’s profile. The vertical axis shows the number of situations a helper is available for and the horizontal axis shows qualitative differences in the separate profiles. Thus, helpers that provide help over a large number of situations are positioned near the top of the plot and those that provide help over a small number of situations are located towards the bottom. The location of helpers along the x-axis shows the degree of similarity or difference in the profile of situations for each helper.

**Figure 2 Spatial representation of a Dependency Grid using POSAC**
The configuration can be described using two measures, one that is similar to the dispersion of dependency, which describes the degree of nonoverlap or differentiation provided by the helpers, known as the Breadth of POSAC. The other which indicates the variation in coverage by helpers, which is known as the Depth of POSAC (Bell, et al., 2010).

A major advantage of the POSAC method is that it can reveal structural differences between dependency grids, which have similar dispersion values (Bell, et al., 2010), and is consistent with the organisational nature of Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955).

2.16.3 Research using the Dependency Grid

Walker (1997) provides a review of the Dependency Grid in terms of its development, application and analysis.

Dependency Grids have been used to explore psychological health, coping, and adjustment in different populations. A number of early studies used single or multiple case study designs to report on the use of the dependency grid as a measure of change following some form of intervention with clinical populations and in clinical settings. For instance, Browning (1988) explored the use of the dependency grid in a counselling context, Nagy (1988) reported on the adjustment of people following limb amputations, and Davis (1985) investigated the progress of nurses during training. More recently, Rosotti, Winter and Watts (2006) investigated trust and dependency in a sample of older and younger adults.

Within the field of human resources, Pezzullo and De Filippo (2009) used a dependency grid to examine the use of support and adherence to emergency procedures of 47 drivers of hazardous materials.
The dependency grid has been used to investigate the relationship between social support and occupational stress. Diamond (1990) presented a single case study of an educational manager who was suffering with stress. A completed dependency grid was used to illustrate the manager’s undispersed pattern of dependency and ineffective stress management strategies, including an over reliance on his spouse and family for help in managing stressful situations at work. A similar finding was found in a quasi-experimental study involving 14 middle managers with hypertension and a control group (Talbot, et al., 1991). Using descriptive statistics to analyse the dependency grids, the study found differences between the clinical group and the control group in their use of support and ways of managing problem situations. In a more recent study, Farrell (2005) used a Dependency Grid to investigate the diversity and use of social support and its impact on wellbeing for a sample of male police officers in the U.S, with mixed results.

Other studies have used the dependency grid to assess people’s use of support and coping strategies in dealing with physical and psychological health problems. This includes coping with diabetes (Gillibrand, 2006), myodesopsia (a visual condition that can be experienced as flashes or spots in the visual field) (Cipoletta, Beccarello, & Galan, 2012); psychiatric illness (Smith, Stefan, Kovaleski, & Johnson, 1991); aggression (Goldberg, 1964); suicidal tendencies (Lester, 1969); and caring of family members with cancer (Cipoletta, Shams, Tonello, & Pruneddu, 2011). Cipoletta et al., (2011) found high levels of stress and depression in carers with limited support and poor self-reliance compared to those with large support networks and those who showed greater self-reliance.

Several studies have adapted the original methodology and have used the Dependency Grid as a type of survey method or questionnaire to investigate dependency relationships with large populations. For instance, Stevens and Walker (1996) were able to investigate the adjustment to university of a large sample of undergraduate students using a dependency grid that was
completed in large groups or posted to individuals. Mitchell and Latchford (2010) employed a similar methodology in their investigation of help-seeking among a sample of 177 prisoners in a UK prison. The study found that older prisoners had significantly fewer supports and were more inclined to use professional help (e.g. doctor) than younger prisoners. Qualitative investigations of help led to the finding that trust in the helper, whether they had the skills to help, and their ability to keep confidences were some of the most commonly cited characteristics of helpers. Similarly, Jones (2009) used as self-report dependency grid in her investigation of help-seeking behaviour and perceptions of support of eleven clinical psychology trainees. Whilst these studies show the versatility of the dependency grid as a research tool, the use of the dependency grid as a type of questionnaire demands a certain degree of intelligence and literacy on the part of the respondents and it is therefore not suitable for some populations, including children and young people.

2.16.4 Dependency, maltreatment and attachment

Two studies have investigated the use of the Dependency Grid with adults who have experienced maltreatment and insensitive parenting.

Chiari and his colleagues (1994) theorised that children who experience sensitive and responsive parenting are exposed to optimal conditions for making sense of themselves and others, and this allows them to disperse their dependencies as role constructs are elaborated (i.e. as they develop better knowledge of others, they can develop better theories about who is available and who is most able to meet their particular needs). In contrast, individuals who have experienced insensitive and neglectful care struggle to develop role constructs, and as a consequence they fail to disperse or differentiate their dependencies. Kelly referred to this childhood pattern of dependency as ‘looking for a replica of ‘mama’ and they want multiple copies’ (1955, p.914).
Chiari et al., (1994) proposed that children who fear the loss of their dependency relationships and become preoccupied with it, do so at the expense of exploration. They struggle to elaborate a sense of themselves relative to their parents and this results in high dependence on parents and low self dependence. In contrast, children who experience caregiving behaviour that is critical or rejecting are likely to respond by excluding those aspects of the self that do not meet the caregiver’s demands or approval. Consequently, they show low dependence on parents and high self dependence. These three groups show some similarity to the secure, insecure-ambivalent and insecure-avoidant attachment styles referred to in the attachment literature by Ainsworth et al., (1978). In their investigation of 122 young adults, Chiari et al. (1994) found support for their hypothesised link between different developmental pathways and the three different dependency profiles. However, they also identified a fourth group which was characterised by low dispersion of dependency, low dependence on fathers but high dependence on mothers and high self-reliance. Chiari et al., (1994) proposed that this group had struggled in their relationship with their parents, and in failing to meet the expectations of their mothers, their response was to accept the situation rather than withdraw from the relationship altogether.

In a recent paper, Bell, Winter and Bhandari (2010) examined the dependency grids of adult survivors of sexual abuse. These researchers found that the clinical group had significantly lower scores on the dispersion of dependency index compared to a control group.

2.16.5 Dependency and Children and Adolescents

The repertory grid is the most researched grid method and has been usefully employed with children (Butler, 1985; Butler & Green, 2007; Hardman, 2001; Ravenette, 1975, 1999), but there is a dearth of research in the use of the dependency grid with children and adolescents.
Most of the literature on dependency grids has focused on specific adult populations. A small number of studies have explored dependency relationships among young people in late adolescence (e.g. Green, 2005; Herbert-Lowe, 1990; Stevens & Walker, 1996) but a search of the literature found only one study that had used a dependency grid with school aged children. This unpublished Australian study by Gannon (1994) is referred to in a paper by Walker (1997) as an investigation of children’s supportive relationships in school. There is very little detail about this study other than the fact that Gannon found no difference in the measure of dispersion between older and younger students in the sample (Year 7 and Year 10) and that the Dispersion of Dependency Index was among the lowest found in a non-clinical group (4.98 with a standard deviation of 1.10) (Walker, 1997).

In a paper titled Personal Construct Theory and Practice to Paediatric Care, Green (2005) illustrated the use of a dependency grid with a ‘student’ who was in the process of re-adjusting her relationship with her boyfriend, after he had been diagnosed with a serious illness. Green does not give the students’ age but refers to the couple living together, which suggests that she was at least in her late teens. Green did, however, offer a brief illustration of the dependency grid with a 12-year-old boy who had had a urostomy and needed to manage his urine bag, in a co-authored book titles, The Child Within (Butler & Green, 2007, pp. 68-69).

The lack of application of the Dependency Grid to children and school age adolescents is rather surprising, given the importance of social support and close relationships on children’s emotional and psychological development. It is possible that clinicians and researchers who are familiar with the tool perceive difficulties in applying the methodology to children. It may also be due to a lack of academic interest in how children allocate their dependencies, as Kelly’s theory suggests that children’s dependencies are concentrated on their immediate caregivers. However, as we have seen
from the literature on children’s support networks, children begin to widen their relationships from mid-childhood onwards, and will increasingly be making discriminations between people and their ability to meet their developing needs. Also a key area of interest is what happens to children’s dependencies when their support networks are disrupted and they are unable to remain with their birth families, which is the case for children and young people in public care.

The aim of this study is to investigate the use of the Dependency Grid by focusing on young people in local authority care. This is an important group to study as their experience of social support is different from their peers by virtue of the fact that they are no longer living with birth family, and in many cases are placed away from the school and community where they once lived with their birth families. Discovering how young people allocate their dependencies and how this might impact on their relationships with carers may have some baring on the stability of their placements and their resilience.

2.16.6 The Dependency Grid as a Measure of Social support

The Dependency Grid has many advantages over existing measures of social support. Firstly, it focuses on perceived support rather than actual support, which the literature suggests is a better indicator of emotional wellbeing (Sarason, et al., 1990). Secondly, it shows the association between helpers and situations which can be used to investigate the functions of specific helpers and whether the respondent is reliant on a few people for support or has a wide network of helpers. Thirdly, the Dependency Grid is underpinned by a fully elaborated psychological theory and psychological therapy and intervention (Viney, 1998; Winter, 2003). Fourthly, the Dependency Grid permits the exploration of an individual’s perceptions or constructs about their relationships using a structured interview technique. This rich, qualitative data is a valuable addition to the assessment of an individual’s support network, and can usefully serve as a
check on the validity of the individual's responses in the grid. This is not available with other methods where the goal is the production of a numerical value or summary measure.

2.17 Conclusion and Rationale for the Study

The literature review has highlighted the vulnerability of children in care and discussed the beneficial effects of social support on children’s wellbeing and development. Research indicates that the lack of support from the birth family may be compensated by the development of strong relationships with carers and the wider social network. However, children’s ability to draw on this support is undermined by frequent moves and the child’s personal styles of coping, which may have its roots in attachment.

Social support is a complex concept and its measurement is fraught with difficulties. A number of instruments and techniques have been developed for use with children and adolescents but they are inadequate for use with young people in care, as they do not capture the complexity of young people’s relationships with birth family, carers and the wider social network.

A new method of investigating the social support networks of young people in care was discussed. This has been used to investigate help-seeking and dependency relationships with adults and is derived from Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955).

2.18 Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study is to develop and investigate the use of the Dependency Grid technique for assessing the relationships and social support networks of young people in care.

1. To determine if the Dependency Grid is an appropriate tool for assessing the support networks of young people in care, with
particular reference to its ability to identify meaningful patterns in young people’s relationships:

a. Relationship with birth family, carers, friends and others.
b. Who people depend on most? Who is depended on the least?
c. Whether a person lacks support or has a highly integrated network of supportive relationships
d. Whether a person is overly self-reliant

2. To develop the best method(s) for analysing the Dependency Grid data, in terms of ease of analysis and ability to provide a meaningful interpretation of the individual’s results.
3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction and Overview

This chapter explains the philosophical position I have adopted for this study and provides a rationale for the chosen methodology. The chapter provides an account of the research procedure and data analysis, as well as issues concerned with the recruitment of participants and ethical issues.

3.2 Philosophical orientation of the research study

3.2.1 Quantitative and Qualitative research

All research is guided by an underlying philosophy in which assumptions are made about epistemology (how we know what we know) and ontology (the nature of reality). These philosophical ideas are strongly linked to specific ways of conducting research.

The social sciences distinguish between two competing paradigms (sets of basic beliefs): positivism and interpretivism. The positivist paradigm is based on the epistemological and ontological assumptions that one reality exists and that it can be discovered objectively. Positivism holds that an observer can take a detached position to discover generalisable laws and truths (Harré, 1981). The positivist position typically involves the collection and analysis of quantitative (or numerical) data to measure and analyse causal relationships.

Researchers who subscribe to the interpretivist paradigm contend that there is no single dominant reality; instead, different meanings are formed which are culturally and socially determined, and the role of the researcher is to understand these multiple realities (Apelgren, 2003). This philosophical position is associated with qualitative research methods such as interviews,
questionnaires and observations, where the focus is on collecting descriptive (textual) data.

The relative merits of these two competing paradigms and their methods have been debated in the social sciences over many years. Those taking a polarised view on the matter argue that qualitative and quantitative research methods are incompatible, owing to their respective ontological and epistemological positions. However, some have argued that the two methods are not mutually exclusive and there has been an increasing move towards mixed method studies, usually under the philosophical position of pragmatism (Bryman, 1988; Hammersley, 1992; Howe, 1988).

3.2.2 Pragmatism and Mixed Methods

Pragmatism is based on the work of American philosophers, such as William James, Dewey, and Pierce. It's main thesis is that truth is ‘what works’ and that the research method or strategy chosen should be the one that best meets the needs and purposes of the study rather than the philosophical position of the researcher (Guba, 1981; Patton, 2002; Robson, 2002; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Pragmatism is not committed to any one paradigm or notion of reality. Researchers have the freedom to use the methods, techniques and procedures that best meet the needs and purposes of the study (Cherryholmes, 1992; Murphy, 1990). Pragmatism legitimises the use of quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study so that the most appropriate method is used to address each research question or aim. This mixed methods approach has many merits. Firstly, the strengths of one method can be used to compensate the weaknesses of the other (Cresswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) and it can expand the scope of enquiry by accessing a wider range of data (O'Cathain & Thomas, 2006). Fransella and Neimeyer (2003) have
argued that mixed methods research is important in providing a complete picture of human experience, which is the essence of psychological science.

Mixed methods research is ideal when researching an area where knowledge is limited and it can provide stronger evidence for a conclusion through the triangulation of findings. Others have argued that mixed methods can increase the generalisability of results and it can provide insights and understanding which might be missed if only a single method were used (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Pragmatism and the mixed methods approach are compatible with Personal Construct Theory and its methods. Both Butt (2012) and Warren (1998, 2010) have commented on the influence of pragmatism on George Kelly’s Personal Construct Theory, most notably his notion of the usefulness of knowledge. As a constructivist theory, Personal Construct Theory contends that there are multiple realities. However, Personal Construct Theory accepts that some perspectives or viewpoints are more useful in making sense of the world than others and these may be shared due to historical, social and cultural factors (Burr, et al., 2012).

The use of mixed methods is suitable for investigating the Dependency Grid, as like its better known cousin, the repertory grid, it is a rather eclectic tool that lends itself to both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The repertory grid has been largely applied within a quantitative research paradigm but there have been recent calls for it to be more widely recognised as a qualitative research technique (Burr, et al., 2012; Viney & Nagy, 2012).

3.2.3 Study design

A mixed methods design was adopted for this study as it is arguably the most appropriate research strategy to address the research aims, which are largely exploratory. The aims were concerned with demonstrating the use
of the dependency grid interview method with young people in care, and is consistent with Gilgun’s (2004) comments on the value and use of qualitative methods to establish the usability of assessment tools.

This study will draw on the original of the dependency grid as an idiographic measure but will seek to identify any emerging patterns of similarity and difference across the sample to address the aims of the research.

### 3.2.3.1 Quantitative data

Quantitative data will be statistically analysed to reveal patterns in the interview data which refer to the ways in which individuals construe their supportive relationships.

A correlational analysis will be used to examine the relationship between the data from the Dependency Grid and the Four Field Map (Sturgess et al., 2001) to measure the strength of network relationships and the provision and use of support.

### 3.2.3.2 Qualitative data

Qualitative data will be obtained from different sources:

- Biographical data for each young person
- Young people’s experience of completing the Dependency Grid
- Young people’s descriptions of helpers and their help-seeking behaviour
• Views of a reference group on the design and usefulness of the Dependency Grid

• Social worker perspectives on the accuracy and usefulness of the Dependency Grid and its analysis.

Qualitative data concerning the participants’ reasons for seeking support from one set of individuals over another will be gathered as part of the interview method. This combination of quantitative and qualitative data is seen as a major advantage of this assessment tool, as both sets of data can provide a more detailed picture of a person’s dependency relationships. It also helps to establish the credibility or validity of the data and the research findings (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Qualitative data will be used to collect information from participants about their experience of completing the Dependency Grid. This is seen as good practice in the design and piloting of new measures (Gilgun, 2004). Qualitative data will also be used to gather the impressions of the Dependency Grid from a reference group of social work practitioners. Finally, both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected from social workers to assess the validity of the individual findings and the usefulness of the information for practitioners.

I analysed the qualitative data using a loose form of thematic analysis. Thematic Analysis is a commonly used qualitative method for examining themes within data (Daly, Kellehear, & Gliksman, 1997). A theme is defined as a level of patterned response or meaning from the data that is related to the research questions. Thematic analysis usually involves six phases to establish meaningful patterns in the data. These are: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
3.2.4 Justification of methods and approaches

Several studies have adapted the methodology so that the Dependency Grid is used to survey and collect data from large samples (e.g. Mitchell & Latchford, 2010; Stevens & Walker, 1996). However, the dependency grid is not by design, a conventional type of questionnaire, and this approach was ruled out for this study as it was anticipated that adolescents in care would struggle to complete the grid by themselves. This would have increased the number of non-returns from a population that is notoriously difficult to recruit and research (Heptinstall, 2000). Moreover, if the young people needed assistance to complete the dependency grid, they would undoubtedly seek someone from their support network, such as a foster carer or social worker, which could have influenced their responses.

In this study the dependency grid was completed using semi-structure, face to face interviews. As a method it allows for different accounts to be compared but gives the researcher a degree of flexibility to follow up issues in more detail, which can give greater understanding of the participant. On a practical level, having face to face interaction with the young people ensured that the participants understood the procedure and it allowed me to monitor and obtain feedback on the completion of the grid. This was considered useful for increasing the validity of the findings.

From an ethical point of view, the interview served as a useful safeguard in case the young people became unsettled or distressed by the nature of the study, as I was in a position to respond and seek support for a young person if this was needed.

The Four Field Map (Sturgess, et al., 2001), a diagrammatic tool for measuring social networks and the strength or significance of relationships, was employed in the main study. Although it is not strictly a measure of construct validity, it was used as a comparable, quantitative measure for
evaluating the Dependency Grids’ ability to comment on the significance of each relationship.

The Dependency Grid was developed and refined in a pilot study before it was used in the main study. The final version was offered up for scrutiny by an ‘expert reference group’ which was comprised of a group of social care and community workers who were being trained in Personal Construct Psychology by myself. Their views on the Dependency Grid were collected during a group discussion which I led during the workshop. The qualitative data, which relates to the face validity and usefulness of the Dependency Grid, was transcribed and analysed for common themes. The findings are reported in the results section.

The quantitative and qualitative data from each Dependency Grid was cross referenced and the individual analyses and overall findings were shared with social workers in a summary report (see Appendix 17 for an example) to obtain their perspectives on the validity of the results and the value of the dependency grid to social work practice.

3.3 Materials

3.3.1 The Dependency Grid

A dependency grid is a matrix with the names of members of the individual’s support network listed in each of the columns across the top, and a set of situations or scenarios listed in the rows on the left hand side. The grid is simply a means of recording the perceived association between supportive relationships and problems and events.

The completion of the grid provides a useful structure to the interview process, as it provides a focus for data collection between the interviewer and interviewee. The dependency grid is accompanied by interview
techniques which are used to elicit the hidden constructs that are present in the pattern of associations between situations and resources.

**Figure 3: Shortened version of the Dependency Grid**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Jane</th>
<th>SELF</th>
<th>Foster carer (m)</th>
<th>Foster carer (f)</th>
<th>Mum</th>
<th>Foster brother</th>
<th>Aunty</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>Social worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex: F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year:11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Performs in front of others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Problems with school work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Share troubles and worries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Need money</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Felt lonely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Problems with carers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Feel better when sad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Unwell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.3.1.1 Item Selection

As a starting point, I consulted George Kelly’s (1955) original Dependency Grid and a modified version presented by Walker (2005). Both Kelly and Walker’s grids were developed for use with adults, and so a new grid had to be developed that was relevant to the needs and experiences of young people in care.
Kelly’s version employed a fixed list of roles, to which respondents supplied names from their support networks. In contrast, the new grid used an open list of helpers so that multiple helpers with the same role relationship could be included.

One of the objectives in the design of the new grid was the inclusion of positive situations and experiences, which Walker (1997) suggests is a more balanced and accurate reflection of people’s relationships. Also, it was felt that the inclusion of positive items would help to reduce defensive responses from respondents who may be concerned about the portrayal of key relationships where the value is placed on providing support in times of stress and difficulty.

The question of who the interviewee would turn to for support for a given situation was investigated hypothetically. This approach was recommended by Davis (1985) and had been used by Talbot et al. (1991). Thinking about the use of support for an immediate or future event seemed preferable to the original procedure which asked the participants to think about an event that had happened to them in the past. This was felt to be too complex for the participants and it was possible that the participants might be misled into thinking about how their immature and more dependent younger selves would have responded to each problem situation.

In Kelly’s original procedure, Dependency Grids were constructed from a problem list generated in discussion with the interviewee, thus providing a unique grid for use in assessing a person’s social support. This would seem appropriate for use with a case study design but for the purposes of this study, a semi-structured grid was required with a set of supplied situations. This had the advantage that it would be quicker to administer and complete and therefore less demanding on participants’ time. Also, in view of the difficult and traumatic histories experienced by many young people in care, it was considered inappropriate to ask participants to generate a personal list of problem situations.
In generating a list of test items, the study drew on related research concerned with stress and wellbeing in children and young people (Alsop & McCaffrey, 1993; Rees, Goswami, & Bradshaw, 2010). These studies highlighted the importance of positive family relationships; the effects of bullying; pocket money and financial support; feelings about appearance and positive reactions from others; and school achievement, as important factors contributing to wellbeing. A number of existing social support measures, academic reviews and articles were also surveyed to identify items that might be suitable for the Dependency Grid. This included the Multidimensional Self-administered Social Support Survey (Sherbourne and Stewart, 1991), The Survey of Children’s Social Support (Dubow and Ullman, 1989), The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment- Revised (Gullone and Robinson, 2005), The Social Support Questionnaire (Sarason, Sarason, Shearin and Pearce, 1987), The Quality of Relationships Inventory (Pearce, Sarason and Sarason, 1991) and the Family Resources Scale (Van Horn, Bellis and Snyder, 2001). These measures had documented their validity and reliability in published journal articles.

The grid items were chosen to represent two types of support: emotional support and practical support (informational support and tangible support). This decision was based on Cutrona’s (2000) suggestion that the four types of support that are commonly referred to in the literature (emotional, instrumental, informational and affirmative) can be reduced to two: Instrumental support, which consists of giving advice and providing practical and tangible support (e.g. driving someone to a doctor’s appointment or providing needed resources), and Nurturant support, which is concerned with emotional support and esteem support (empathic listening, encouragement and expressions of care and concern).

Nurturant or emotional support is a form of indirect help as its function is to help a person feel better about a problem, whereas instrumental support
provides direct support to enable a person to overcome difficulties that are causing them problems or distress (Cutrona, 2000).

A set of twenty five situations was devised which seemed to capture the range of behaviours and needs assessed by the survey instruments, and which appeared relevant to the lives and experiences of adolescents in care. It was felt that this number of situations would ensure that the instrument was not overly long or time consuming to complete yet would provide detail covering a range of supportive situations. Achieving the right balance in the number of situations was recognised as important for ensuring that attention, interest, and motivation was optimised.

The situations were later coded by three psychologists to assess whether there was agreement in the categories of emotional and practical support. Practical help was defined as support to meet the individual’s physical needs as well as informational advice to achieve particular tasks. Emotional support referred to situations where there was an emotional component. There was broad agreement on items that were defined as instrumental or practical help and those that were characterised as forms of emotional help and support (see Appendix 18).

3.3.1.2 Pilot and revision

A version of the Dependency Grid used in the current study was piloted (Powell, 2010) and revised in response to feedback from young people and my own reflections on administering the tool. More contextual information was provided for the situations and the grid was redesigned so that alternate shaded columns were used to reduce errors when respondents were completing the grids.

Davis (1985) suggested that grids could be completed using rating scales to indicate the likelihood that a person’s help would be sought. This ordering
or ranking of helpers was recommended in my previous study (Powell, 2010) and has featured in other research designs (e.g. Talbot, et al., 1991). It was trialled with one young person but was abandoned during the trial because it was found to be too complex and time consuming for the participant to complete. Consequently, it was not adopted for the main study.

Whilst inputing data into a laptop computer for statistical analysis, I considered the possibility of developing an electronic version of the Dependency Grid, which allowed the interviewees to input their responses directly onto a laptop computer. To achieve this, a Microsoft Word version of the grid was developed.

The young people used the arrow keys on the keyboard to navigate across the grid and were asked to mark the cells showing the association between situation and helper (resource) with the number ‘1’. This was to assist with the input of binary data for the computer analysis of the Dependency Grids. The grid was designed so that the numbers appeared in red font, as this contrasted well against the black, white and grey colours of the grid and made it easier to see the patterns in the grid.

3.3.1.3 Reference group

During the data collection period, I was involved in preparing and delivering a short course on Personal Construct Psychology to a group of social care professionals and community workers. This afforded the opportunity to present the Dependency Grid to the group to obtain their views on its face validity and utility. The reference group were given paper copies of the grid used in the study and were shown the computer version. They were asked three broad questions:
• Whether they as professionals assessed young people’s support networks and if so, how?
• General thoughts on the situations or items in the grid.
• Advantages and disadvantages of the Dependency Grid measure.

The discussion was tape recorded and later transcribed. The main themes or points were categorised and are reported in the results section.

3.3.2 The Four Field Map

A second instrument, the Four Field Map (Sturgess, et al., 2001) was included in the study. This is a variation of the Five Field Map described in the literature review (Samuelsson, et al., 1996). Data from the Four Field Map was compared with the individual results from the Dependency Grids to determine if there was agreement between the two measures in assessing the significance of each relationship to the young person, as ‘closeness’ can be an indicator of emotional support.

The Four Field Map is an assessment tool which is used to measure the structure and composition of an individual’s social network, and is one of a number of measures available in the Measures of Children’s Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing portfolio (Frederickson & Dunsmuir, 2001). The Four Field Map consists of six concentric circles that are divided into four sectors. Each sector represents the domains of School, Family, Friends/ Neighbours, and Relatives. Respondents complete the map by recording the names or roles of people in their support networks on to the map, according to the relevant domain and degree of intimacy or closeness of the relationship. The young person is asked to record their closest relationships in the rings near the centre of the map, and the most distant relationships in the outer rings.
3.4 Sample Size

Ten participants were recruited for the study. This was deemed an appropriate size due to the exploratory nature of the study and the type of methodology (Madill, Gough, Lawton, & Stratton, 2005; Winter, 2003).

3.4.1 Recruitment of Participants

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants for inclusion in the study. This ensured that the Dependency Grid was tested with young people of different ages, gender, and experiences of care (e.g. foster care and residential care, interim care orders, voluntary care and full care orders). As the study’s aims and objectives focused on the process and evaluation of the Dependency Grid, a representative sample in terms of generalisation to the population was not aimed for. The priority for the research was on achieving a sample size that ensured a variety and depth of experiences rather than a large sample.

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria guided the recruitment process.

3.4.1.1 Inclusion criteria:

- Young people aged between 11 and 18 years who are in the care of the Local Authority
- Young people who have been in the care placements for at least 6 months
- Young people who have the maturity and intellectual ability to respond to an interview.
- Young people who were resident in the local authority
3.4.1.2 Exclusion criteria:

- Young people who are not in the care of the Local Authority.
- Young people who were resident outside the local authority
- Young people who have been in their care placements for less than six months.
- Young people with severe emotional and psychological difficulties who require Tier 3/4 mental health intervention.
- Young people with significant learning and communication difficulties.

General consent for the recruitment of young people was given by the Head of Children’s Social Care and senior managers in the local authority where I was employed as an educational psychologist. To maintain appropriate ethical standards, once a list of potential recruits had been generated, I contacted the children’s social workers to discuss the appropriateness of inviting each young person to take part in the study and to seek their consent for the young person’s participation. Several children were excluded from the list of participants on the advice of social workers because it was felt that they would be unsettled or unwilling to participate in the study.

The next stage in the recruitment process involved contact with the children’s foster carers. The children’s foster carers were contacted by telephone to give a brief outline of the study and to seek their views about the young person’s participation in the research. With the foster carer’s agreement, written information about the study was posted to them and they were asked to share this information with the young person.

The foster carers were each contacted by telephone after 3 days of receiving the written information to ask if the young person was willing to take part in the research. If the young person agreed to participate, then
they were asked whether they would prefer to be interviewed at home or at school.

I made telephone contact with the schools of those young people who asked to be interviewed at school to provide information about the study and to seek agreement for the young person to be seen in school. Following this, written information about the research was sent by post or was e-mailed to the school to formally seek their consent.

A sample of 9 young people was recruited using this procedure. A tenth participant was recruited by her carers after I had sent information about the study to one of the Local Authority’s children’s homes.

3.5 Procedure

I interviewed all the participants. Seven young people completed the measures at school and three participants completed the Dependency Grid in their care placements.

I reminded each participant of the purpose of the study and it was explained to them what they would be expected to do. The participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the interview and the study at any point and that they could pass on any question they did not wish to answer.

Each participant was introduced to the Four Field Map and asked to think about the ‘Important people in their life’. The young people suggested names of people from their support network using the four quadrants (school, family, relatives, friends and neighbours) as prompts. With each name, I asked the participant what their relationship was to the named person (e.g. friend, aunt, uncle etc). The participant was then asked to use the concentric circles to report on the closeness of their relationship with the
individual. The person’s name and their role or relationship to the participant was then recorded on the map.

The participants were asked to include social workers and current carers, if these two relationships had not been mentioned by the young person in the completion of the map.

The participant’s list of names was then transferred on to a blank Dependency Grid on my lap top computer. I then read the following instruction to the participant:

*Imagine you were going to do something in front of an audience or spectators, like a school play, concert, football match or other sport. Now suppose each of the people whose names you have written at the top of the columns in the grid were around at the time. Which ones, if any, could you expect to be there to see you? Put a tick or an X below each of their names in the first row of squares.*

I read aloud a description of each situation corresponding to the 25 rows in the grid (see Appendix 1). After each description, the respondent proceeded to use the arrow keys on the computer keyboard to move the cursor along the row and to record the number ‘1’ under the names of the people they would seek help and support from for each particular situation.

On completing the Dependency Grid, the participant was asked to consider some of their responses by explaining why help would be sought from some helpers and not others for certain situations. This process of questioning was used to uncover the personal constructs or meanings behind the discriminations made between resources (helpers) and situations. If respondents struggled to contrast multiple selections, they were asked to focus on key individuals.

In the final part of the interview an impression was given of the overall pattern in the grid and the participants were asked about its accuracy. The
participants were then asked a series of questions about the Dependency Grid from a respondent's perspective, including suggestions for ways it could be improved (see Appendix 3).

The interview was then terminated and the participant was thanked for their involvement in the research. Finally, they were asked if they were happy to be included in the study.

Each participant was then given a copy of the debrief information sheet which contained the relevant contact details for the study and information about local support services (see Appendix 8).

The participants' carers were contacted by telephone within 24 hours of each interview to check on each participant's response and progress. This information was collected as part of the results.

Demographic information on each participant was obtained from case work files:

- Age on first entering care
- Reason(s) for coming into care
- Number of care placements
- Length of current placement
- Contact arrangements, including frequency of contact.

A copy of the Dependency Grid and a summary report of the findings for each participant was produced and shared with each participant’s social worker (see Appendix 17). The social workers were invited to comment on the credibility or validity of the findings and the usefulness of the Dependency Grid interview using a questionnaire (see Appendix 4).
3.5.1 Data Collection and Analysis

3.5.1.1 Visual analysis

At the end of each interview, the completed grids were inspected and observations of the patterns were shared with the interviewees. This process helped to confirm the identification of people who were most and least important to the participant in meeting their needs.

3.5.1.2 Descriptive Statistics

The quantitative data from the individual grids was analysed using descriptive statistics. Bar charts were produced to show the frequency of help seeking and the number of helpers available for each situation. The data was clustered to show the provision of emotional and practical support.

Data from the four field map was presented in diagramatic form using the same six concentric circles with one half of the map representing emotional support and the other practical support. The role titles of each helper was recorded in one or more of the sectors to show the type of support each helper was available for. The number of supportive situations served by each helper within each sector was quantified and visually represented using different sized fonts.

3.5.1.3 Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis of each grid was performed by GRIDSTAT5 (Bell, 2009). This is an MS-DOS programme for the analysis of repertory Grids and Dependency Grids. GRIDSTAT5 was used to calculate three indices of dispersion which were discussed in the literature review:

- The Dispersion of Dependency Index
• Uncertainty Index and Uncertainty Coefficient
• Breadth and Depth of POSAC

GRIDSTAT5 was used to produce models of the hierarchical patterns in the Dependency Grid data using POSAC (Bell, et al., 2010). The co-ordinates for each helper were entered into SPSS version 16 to produce charts for inclusion in this thesis.

3.5.2 Four Field Map

For each participant, the results of the Four Field Map are shown in a diagram similar to figure 4. This combines the data from the Four Field Map with the results from the Dependency Grid. The diagram shows the position of each helper, as recorded on the Four Field Map. The size of text used to record each helper ranged from 8 pt. to 26 pt. to reflect the proportion of emotional support and practical support given by each helper (see Appendix 16 for further details). The table beneath the diagram is used to record the position of helpers who do not provide support under one or both categories of support. Thus, in Figure 4, brother and Nana do not provide practical help and so they are listed in the table in section 4 and 5 to reflect their position on the Four Field Map. Foster carer (f) is the respondent’s closest relationship but whereas foster carer (f) provides greater practical support than friend 1, friend 1 provides greater help for emotional issues than foster carer (f).
Figure 4: Example of the Four Field Map

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

3.5.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

The verbal accounts given by participants were audiotaped during the completion of the Dependency Grid interview. The qualitative data was subject to individual analysis and used to complement the statistical results.
3.5.3.1 Views of social workers and expert reference group

The quantitative and qualitative data from the individual social worker questionnaire and interviews was analysed and presented in a separate section in chapter 4.

The views of the expert reference group were audiotaped and transcribed. The data was then subject to a loose form of thematic analysis.

3.5.4 Ethical issues and procedures

The study was carried out within the ethical guidelines set out by the University of Manchester and the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2010).

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the University of Manchester’s research ethics committee (Appendix 12, 13 and 14).

3.5.4.1 Informed consent

Consent is required from parents or those with parental responsibility for research that involves young people under the age of sixteen years (The British Psychological Society, 2010). In this study, general consent was given by the Head of children’s Social Care, and prior to seeking agreement from the young people, consent was obtained from social workers, foster carers, and their birth parents (where the birth parent retained parental rights).
Each young person was made aware of the project's aims, the procedures involved, and how their information would be used.

The information sheet that was posted to participants before the interviews informed them of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage. The interviewees were reminded of this fact at the start of each interview.

3.5.4.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The participants were given assurance that their data would be treated confidentially and that the only exception to this rule was if they disclosed information of a safeguarding nature.

All audio recordings of the participant interviews and their personal details were kept securely in a locked cabinet. Computer records, including the Dependency Grid data were stored on a laptop computer which was encrypted and password protected.

The names of all participants and any identifiable details from the interviews were changed in order to protect the anonymity of the participants.

3.5.4.3 Managing potential distress

It was recognised that the research topic could cause distress for some young people in care as they are at greater risk of having experienced problematic relationships and issues of loss and trauma.

Although the participants were asked about the support from different relationships, including birth family, they were not questioned about their history or the reasons for them being looked after.
The exclusion of young people with significant mental health problems and the screening out of young people by social workers who felt that it was inappropriate for them to take part, minimised the risk to participants.
4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This research study is concerned with the use of an adapted version of George Kelly’s Dependency Grid for examining the social support networks of young people in care. The Dependency Grid is an instrument derived from Personal Construct Theory for measuring people’s dependency relationships and social support.

This research used mixed methods to address the research questions, resulting in qualitative and quantitative data. The mixed-method data have been analysed and presented separately so it is clear to the reader how each data set contributes to the overall findings. It also shows how the findings from both types of data were verified against each other for the purpose of establishing credibility.

The chapter will present relevant demographic information about the sample and will report on the descriptive statistics and measures that were used to analyse the Dependency Grids. The results from the Four Field Map will be presented and compared with the findings from the Dependency Grid to show the relationship between social support and emotional attachment.

The second part of the chapter will focus on the individual results of each participant before presenting the views of social workers, young people and the reference group on the Dependency Grid.

Finally, the chapter will explore the general patterns in the data across the individual cases.
4.2 The sample

Table 1 provides information on the demographic characteristics and care histories of the ten young people who took part in this study.

The majority of those who took part were living with foster carers and had been with their carers for a considerable length of time. The three exceptions were: P9, P7 and P5. P9 had been in foster care for only six months. P7 and P5 were living in separate residential homes, and P7 had only been in his placement for two weeks. P7 was included in the study as consent had been obtained before his previous placement had ended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age (Yrs)</th>
<th>Legal status</th>
<th>Care category/ Reason for being looked after</th>
<th>Placement</th>
<th>Length of time in care</th>
<th>No. of placements</th>
<th>Length of current placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>S.31¹</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>11 yrs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>S.31</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>4 yrs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>S.31</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>7 yrs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>S.31</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>6 yrs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>S.20²</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Residential care</td>
<td>2 yrs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>S.20</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>6 yrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>S.20</td>
<td>Challenging behaviour and risk to health</td>
<td>Residential care</td>
<td>5 yrs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>S.38³</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>S.31</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>7 yrs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>S.20</td>
<td>Ill health/ death of grandparent</td>
<td>Foster care</td>
<td>6 yrs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6 yrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 refers to children on a Full Care Order
² Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 refers to children on a Voluntary Care Order
³ Section 38 of the Children Act 1989 refers to children on an Interim Care Order
Table 2 shows the size of each participant’s social network (i.e. the number of significant people reported by each participant) and the use of support, as measured by the proportion of the grid that was completed.

**Table 2 Network size and use of social support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Number of dependencies (network size)</th>
<th>Percentage of Grid used (total dependencies)</th>
<th>Mean number of helpers utilised by each participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to table 2, P8 has the smallest support network and P5 has the largest. The mean network size for the sample was 20.4 but the mean number of people that the participants turned to for support was 4.6. P3 had the highest mean number of helpers in the sample (11.5 helpers), followed by P10 (9.6 helpers). P1 and P8 had the smallest mean number of helpers (2.1 helpers) for the sample, however, there are doubts about the validity of P8’s results as she was reluctant to include all the people in her support network.

Overall the data appears to show that there is a poor relationship between the size of a person’s network and the provision and use of support. This was confirmed in an analysis of the data using Spearman’s rho. Spearman’s rho yielded an r value of -0.198 (p>0.05, with a one tailed test). It would appear that having a large network does not result in increased levels of help-seeking or support.
Table 3 presents the analysis of each Dependency Grid using two statistical measures of dispersion.

### Table 3 Dispersion of Dependency Index and Uncertainty Index scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dispersion of Dependency (DDI)</th>
<th>Uncertainty Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Column</td>
<td>Row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>8.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>6.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>8.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>7.65</td>
<td>7.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>7.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>8.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>7.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>8.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>8.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>7.76</td>
<td>8.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dispersion of dependency Index (DDI) is reported here as it is one of the most commonly used summary statistics for investigating dependency grids. One problem with the DDI is that it can vary with the sample size and so to avoid this, the DDI in this study was calculated on a fixed sample size of 10, as recommended by Dr Richard Bell in his correspondence with me via e-mail.

Both the Uncertainty Index and the DDI report on the dispersion of dependency by rows (situations) and columns (helpers). Although there is some agreement between the DDI and Uncertainty Index in their description of the relationship between columns and rows for each participant, the two measures do not agree on the degree of dispersion of dependency in the individual grids. For instance, according to the Uncertainty Index, P1’s Dependency Grid is the least dispersed for the sample and P10’s Dependency Grid is the most dispersed grid for the sample. If we exclude P8’s grid for the reasons outlined above, P1 also scores as the least dispersed grid using the DDI. However, the DDI suggests that P2’s grid is the most dispersed grid for the sample. A quick visual scan of the density...
and spread of the marks that are present in the grids shows that this is not the case (see figure 5).

The value of the Uncertainty Index does appear to correspond with increasing levels of dispersion in the grids. However, the Uncertainty Index has failed to detect differences in the amount of dispersion between the grids of P2, P3, P7 and P10, which from inspecting the actual grids, show different degrees of sparseness.

Table 4 Breadth and Depth of POSAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Breadth of POSAC</th>
<th>Depth of POSAC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 displays the results for the Breadth and Depth of POSAC analysis. The Breadth of POSAC is another statistical measure of dispersion which has been used in the assessment of large numbers of dependency grids (Bell, Bhandari and Winter, 2010). Like the DDI and the Uncertainty Index, the Breadth of POSAC scores do not reflect the actual variation in the dispersion present in the dependency grids. We can get a better sense of this from table 5 which ranks the participants’ scores on the three measures of dispersion.

POSAC also reports on the degree of variation in the support provided by individual helpers, which is measured by the Depth of POSAC. The important thing here is the symmetry or asymmetry between the Breadth and Depth of POSAC. According to these results, P1 and P8 have low Breadth of POSAC scores for the sample but their Depth of POSAC scores
are high. It suggests that P1 and P8 are reliant on a few people to meet all their needs. P3, P7, P9 and P10 on the other hand, have a low Depth of POSAC score relatively to their Breadth of POSAC score. This suggests that P3, P7, P9 and P10 are reliant on many people to meet a small number of needs. The Breadth and Depth of POSAC scores for the remainder of the sample are more symmetrical, which implies that a number of helpers are turned to for support for a wide range of needs.

Table 5 Participants by rank order according to the measure of dispersion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank order</th>
<th>Breadth of POSAC</th>
<th>Rank order</th>
<th>Uncertainty Index (column)</th>
<th>Rank order</th>
<th>DDI (column)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>P8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>P8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>P1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>P6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>P6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>P8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>P6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>P4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>P5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>P9</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>P2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>P9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>P4</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>P10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>P7</td>
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<td>P10</td>
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<td>P3</td>
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<td>P2</td>
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<td>P3</td>
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<td>P3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>P9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>P10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>P2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that the three measures of dispersion differ in their assessment of the degree of dispersion present in each grid.

A comparison of the data from table 2 and table 5 suggests that the values for the Breadth of POSAC score are related to the size of the individual’s personal network (i.e. number of available helpers). From this, it would appear that the Breadth of POSAC is a less sophisticated measure of dispersion than the Uncertainty Index or DDI.
### Table 6 Uncertainty Coefficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Uncertainty Coefficient</th>
<th>Uncertainty Coefficient</th>
<th>Symmetric relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Column</td>
<td>Row</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
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<td>0.38</td>
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<td>P2</td>
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<tr>
<td>P3</td>
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<td>0.13</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.26</td>
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<td>P5</td>
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<td>0.21</td>
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<td>P6</td>
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<td>P7</td>
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<td>0.43</td>
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<td>P8</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.41</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Uncertainty Coefficient was used to index the relationship between situations and helpers (see table 6) and can be used to discriminate between constricted grids and dilated undispersed grids.

We can see from table 6 that among the five participants with the highest Uncertainty Index scores, P10 and P3 have the lowest Uncertainty Coefficient scores for the sample, which suggests that there is no structure to their dependency relationships. In other words, it cannot be certain who the individual might turn to for support. In contrast, P1 and P8’s scores show asymmetrical predictions between situations and resources (helpers), with one high coefficient (helpers) and one low coefficient (situations). Both are examples of what Kelly referred to as ‘constricted Dependency’ where there is greater reliance on a small number of people to meet the individual’s needs. P9 and P6 also have asymmetric scores but to a lesser extent than P1 and P8. Again, it suggests that there is a tendency towards seeking help from specific resources to meet their individual needs.
4.3 The Dependency Grids

The following pages show the actual patterns in the completed dependency grids of the ten participants. With the exception of P8, the grids are presented in ascending order according to the Uncertainty Index (column) score.

Figure 5: The completed Dependency Grids

- **P1**
  - Uncertainty Index column = 0.64
  - DDI = 8.16

- **P6**
  - Uncertainty Index column = 0.77
  - DDI = 6.67

- **P5**
  - Uncertainty Index column = 0.85
  - DDI = 7.79

- **P9**
  - Uncertainty Index column = 0.87
  - DDI = 6.83
P7

Uncertainty Index column = 0.93
DDI = 7.93

P2

Uncertainty Index column = 0.94
DDI = 8.16

P4

Uncertainty Index column = 0.94
DDI = 7.65

P8

Uncertainty Index column = 0.82
DDI = 3.2
4.4 Summary

It is clear from ‘eye-balling’ the Dependency Grids that there are differences in the density and dispersion of marks across the ten grids. The three measures of dispersion were poor at indexing the degree of dispersion present in the grids and they did not correspond well with each other.

The Breadth and Depth of POSAC and Uncertainty Coefficient were used to describe the relationship between situations and helpers. There is some agreement between the scores and the observable patterns in the actual grids.
4.5 Dependency and closeness of relationships

The Four field map (Sturgess, et al., 2001) was used to explore the relationship between social support, as measured by the Dependency Grid, and emotional ties, as measured by the Four Field Map. It was assumed that there would be a degree of overlap between the two measures.

A correlational analysis was conducted between the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid using SPSS Version 16 (SPSS Inc, 2008). Spearman’s rho was used to calculate the relationship between the amount of support provided by each network member (i.e. the number of situations met by each helper), using the Dependency Grid, and the closeness of the relationship to the participant, using the Four Field Map. A scale of 1 to 6 was used to measure the strength of each relationship, with 1 being a close relationship, and 6 a distant relationship.

A correlation $r = -0.243$ ($p>0.05$) was found between these two instruments which suggests that there is a low, negative correlation between the provision of social support and the closeness of the relationship. Although it is a weak correlation, the direction of the relationship is expected. Network members who are closest to the participant were expected to have a low score on the Four Field Map but a high score on the Dependency Grid. This would reflect their importance as a source of social support. However, the fact that a low correlation was found indicates that social support, as measured by the Dependency Grid, is not a defining feature of close relationships.
4.6 Case Studies

The following section examines the individual results for each participant which is used to explore the utility of the Dependency Grid.

4.6.1 Participant 1 (P1)

4.6.1.1 Biographical Information

P1 was taken into local authority care due to concerns about her mother’s lifestyle and failure to protect the children from their father, who had been convicted for the sexual abuse of P1’s sister. P1 had also alleged that she had been physically and sexually abused by her brother.

P1 had been in care for ten years and had been living for almost four years with her sixth set of foster carers (not counting periods of respite care). She was attending her mainstream secondary school but her behaviour was a cause for concern.

‘P1 presents as a confident and articulate which belies her underlying vulnerability. She feels most comfortable when she is the centre of attention.’

‘[she] needs close support and supervision as she continues to function both emotionally and behaviourally at a younger adolescent age.’

P1 had stopped attending contact with her mother, who she was permitted to see six times per year. She was, however, following her family and contacting her mother via a social media website.
4.6.1.2 Analysis of P1’s Dependency Grid

Figure 6 Number of situations each helper is turned to for support

Figure 6 shows that P1 is reliant on a small number of individuals for support. Just over half the number of people listed as ‘important’ in P1’s life were perceived as helpful in dealing with a number of practical and emotional events. However, most support is derived from two relationships: friend 1 and female foster carer.

The chart indicates that friend 1 is a significant source of emotional support but offers little in the way of practical help. P1’s female foster carer is the second most supportive relationship and female foster carer appears to play a greater role in providing practical support, but the relationship is also important in helping P1 with emotional issues.
P1’s male foster carer is the 6th provider. P1 perceived this relationship as providing limited support. The male foster carer was turned to in only three of the twenty-five situations listed in the grid.

Friend 2 is the second most important source of support among P1’s friends but provides considerably less support than friend 1. Friend 2 is supportive in eight out of twenty-five situations. Friend 3 is the 8th helper but she provides very little support to P1. Friend 3 was helpful in only one situation. Friend 4 was not relied on for support for any of the situations listed in the grid.

The quantitative data suggests that P1 would not seek support from her birth family for any of the twenty-five situations listed in the Dependency Grid. P1’s social worker and foster sister were more helpful than birth family members but there were few situations in which their help would be enlisted.

P1’s teacher and support assistant were helpful to P1 in managing emotional and practical issues. This shows the importance of school relationships for P1.
Figure 7 shows that P1 is reliant on very few people for practical help but with a few exceptions, she has a number of people she can turn to for support to meet her emotional needs. P1 is selective in who she would turn to for help if she had problems with her foster carers or her birth family; or she found herself in serious trouble or needed to manage her anger. P1 has a number of people who make her feel listened to and understood and whom she can count on to visit her at hospital and who make her feel better when she is feeling sad or depressed.

**POSAC Diagram**

P1’s Dependency Grid was statistically analysed using POSAC to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers.
P1 has a relatively simple hierarchical structure. There are three distinct primary helpers: Friend 1, female foster carer, and teacher, whose supportive roles are underpinned by alternative helpers. The structure is simple, as there are few interconnections between the subordinate helpers, which suggest that each helper is turned to for a narrow set of situations.

Friend 1 provides support for the greatest number of situations, hence her position at the top of the hierarchy. The spatial position of friend 1 relative to female foster carer suggests that they provide support for a similar subset of situations. Support assistant and friend 2 provide support for some (but not all) of the situations served by friend 1. The chain of support running from friend 1 to friend 2 and friend 3, suggests that they have a similar supportive role but this reduces lower down the chain.
Female foster carer is the second most relied on relationship in the hierarchy, with male foster carer and social worker operating as subordinate helpers.

Despite sharing the same social context, the spatial location of teacher and support assistant suggests that they have different supportive roles.

P1’s birth family and foster sister feature at the bottom of the hierarchy, reflecting their weak position as a source of help and support.

4.6.1.3 Qualitative Interview Data

P1 was asked to explain some of her responses on the Dependency Grid.

P1 perceived her friends as very important. She described friend 1 as her best friend and said that they had been friends for a very long time. P1 felt that friend 1 would be good at supporting her with school/ college work because they followed the same curriculum and would have a better understanding of the subject:

“[Friend 1] does the same work as me”.

P1 said that friend 1 was good at keeping her calm:

“[Friend 1] calms me down when I’m annoyed.”

She also acknowledged the support of other friends in helping her to calm down when she is annoyed, however, their usefulness was more to do with circumstance and less to do with personal characteristics, as she said she was more inclined to lose her temper at school than at home.
P1 admired friend 1:

“a nice dress sense”

and she respected her friend’s advice in relation to clothes and fashion.

P1 struggled to explain why she would not seek help from friend 4 for any of the situations listed in the Dependency Grid. P1 simply said that they were

“not as close”.

P1 could count on her friends to help if she was having problems with her family or foster carers. However, she said she was rather private about these matters and would be selective about who she would share her worries and concerns with:

“When I’m sad..we sit and talk”. “I don’t share my business with everyone except for them.”

P1 admitted that there were some things that she could share with her friends but not with her female foster carer:

“I tell [female foster carer] stuff but not like…stuff I share with my mates.”

P1 said that she was rather immature in comparison to her friends:

“….in the group [of friends] I’m kind of the baby. Friend 1 is the more mature one, and then friend 2 is another mature one. And then there’s me.”
Female foster carer

P1 said she had a close relationship with her female carer, which she attributed to the fact that she was a “mummy’s girl”. P1’s female carer was perceived as important in providing practical help but she was unable to say why she would seek support from her carer rather than other helpers for this. For instance, when she was asked about why she would prefer to have her female foster carer look after her if she was unwell rather than someone else (e.g. male carer), she said:

“[female carer] is the only person…don’t know, I just go to her.”

P1’s female carer was also seen as supportive with a number of emotional issues, including bullying and peer problems, and providing help and support if she was in serious trouble. P1 felt that her carer would address any problems with bullying because she was in regular contact with her school

(“she comes into school [a lot]”).

P1 saw her carer as a reliable figure in her life. She said her female carer would listen to her and would stand by her if she got into serious trouble:

“She’d probably be angry and shout at me but she’s still there.”

Male foster carer

P1’s weaker relationship with her male carer was partly attributed to her character:

“He’s important but not…I’m not really a daddy’s girl. I’m more of a mummy’s girl.”
P1 said that she did not rely on her male carer for very much:

“I speak to him but…that’s it really.”

She also talked about a difference in attitude between her carers over her appearance and maturing interest in boys, which had caused tension between P1 and her male carer:

“[My male carer] doesn’t like me wearing make-up, or having a boyfriend, stuff like that. [My female carer]…she doesn’t really like me having a boyfriend and wearing makeup but she understands.”

She described mild irritation at her carer’s approach:

“[male carer] is “understanding but like…he’s not mature…he jokes about…..and winds me up.”

**Birth family**

P1 sought little support from her birth family in comparison with other members of her support network. When asked about this, P1 referred to the lack of contact with various family members which had left her feeling estranged from them:

“I see my mum, I don’t see my sister, I don’t see my granddad or my dad”.

“I have lived with my mum but it just feels like…she’s not like a stranger to me but I don’t feel like I know her.” “Cause I’ve not lived with her for so long.”
P1 seemed uncertain about support from her birth father which went beyond a lack of involvement in her life.

“I don’t think my dad [would help]…..I know I don’t”

Social worker

P1 expressed uncertainty about whether or not she would seek support from her social worker:

“Don’t know. Don’t see her a lot.”

Four Field Map

Figure 9 overleaf shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table underneath the diagram is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.
Figure 9: P1’s Four Field Map

Figure 9 shows that friend 1 and female foster provide the most support and are among P1’s closest relationships. However, it is clear from the diagram that there is a poor relationship between the position of network members.
on the Four Field Map and the amount of practical and emotional support each person provides. Mum, foster carer (male) and support assistant are among P1’s closest relationships but these people provide very little support to P1, as measured by the Dependency Grid.

The four field map suggests that P1 is less close to her birth father and birth siblings than she is to her birth mother, carers and foster siblings.

4.6.1.4 Dependency Grid completed in 2009

P1 was a participant in my previous study which used a Dependency Grid with a slightly different set of situations to those used in the current study (Powell, 2010). P1’s previous Dependency Grid is worth considering as it provides interesting data on the credibility and dependability of the findings.

P1’s latest Dependency Grid had three more helpers than the Dependency Grid completed in 2009 but there was less help-seeking in the 2012 grid (12.5%), as measured by the proportion of grid completed, compared with the Dependency Grid from 2009 (32.9%). Unsurprisingly, P1’s 2012 grid had a lower Uncertainty Index score than her 2009 grid but there was a greater concentration of dependency, according to the Uncertainty Coefficient. In other words, P1’s 2012 grid shows a greater reliance on certain relationships compared with the grid completed in 2009.

Table 7 Uncertainty Index scores for 2009 and 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncertainty Index</th>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Row</th>
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<td>2009</td>
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<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 Uncertainty Coefficient scores for 2010 and 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Uncertainty Coefficient</th>
<th>Uncertainty Coefficient Symmetric relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The differences in quantitative scores did not translate into differences at a qualitative level. At this level, there was high level of consistency between the two grids. Firstly, P1’s Dispersion of Dependency Index was the lowest among the participants in the 2009 study, and the description of P1’s grid in 2009 could easily refer to the grid completed in 2012:

‘P1 was most reliant on her female foster carer (22.1%), followed by her friend B (19.1%), friend A (17.6%) friend C (16.2%) and friend D (16.2%). Her grid points to a lack of dependence on her birth mother (0%), male foster carer (0%), social worker (0%) and female teacher (0%)........ Self is subordinate in the structure, reflecting a lack of self-reliance across all situations in the grid.’

Powell (2010)

P1’s comments about her male carer in 2009 are also consistent with the comments made in the current study:

‘She didn’t regard her male foster carer as important in meeting her needs and when asked about this she explained that they often argue and “wind each other up”. She emphasised that the relationship was not bad “we do have a laugh but we just argue.”

Powell (2010)
4.6.1.5 Discussion of Analysis

P1 obtained a relatively low dispersion of dependency score, as measured by the Uncertainty Index. It suggests that she seeks support from a small number of potential helpers. P1 obtained a high Uncertainty Coefficient score which points to a strong relationship between particular helpers and particular support needs. This interpretation of the grid data is supported by more detailed analysis.

Only a proportion of people in P1’s support network were perceived as helpful in meeting her practical and emotional needs. P1’s female foster carer was an important source of help and support to P1 but P1’s friends were also significant, with friend 1 scoring as her most dependent relationship.

The relationship between P1 and her male foster carer was not an easy one. This was evident from his score on the Dependency Grid and P1’s comments during the interview.

P1’s female foster carer and friends 1 and 2 were recorded as close relationships on the Four Field Map but closeness did not equate to the provision of support. For instance, birth mum is a close relationship but P1 did not rely on her mum or any other member of her birth family for support. Contact with birth family and the nature of the abuse that P1 was subjected to may have been a factor influencing this decision but it did not influence their scores on the Four Field Map.
4.6.2 Participant 2 (P3)

4.6.2.1 Biographical information

P2 was on a full care order and had been in local authority care for just over four years. P2 was taken into care due to domestic violence, parental alcohol misuse and poor standards of care.

P2 had been living with his third set of foster carers for almost two years when he took part in the study, and was reported to be quite settled. His previous placements had ended because of his anger and aggressive outbursts.

4.6.2.2 Analysis of P2’s Dependency Grid

Figure 10 Number of situations each helper is turned to for support
It can be seen from figure 10 that emotional support is universally provided by members of P2’s support network but P2 is reliant on a small number of people for practical help and support.

P2’s female foster carer is his main source of support. The relationship provides both emotional and practical help to P2 across 60% of situations listed in the Dependency Grid. There is, however, a marked difference in the support provided by female foster carer compared to male foster carer. P2’s male carer is relied on for just over a quarter of the number of situations served by his female carer. Even P2’s foster brother (1) and foster sister (2) are perceived as being more helpful than his male carer.

P2’s birth father is his most dependent relationship among birth family members. Mum provides support for fewer situations than Dad, and unlike Dad, Mum only provides emotional support. According to the chart, Mum provides support for an equal number of situations to birth sister.

Overall, P2’s chart shows greater dependency on adult relationships, including teacher and social worker, than friends. Friend 1 is the most supportive friend, providing both practical and emotional support but friend 1 provides help with only 12% of situations. P2’s remaining friends are helpful in only two situations. This is also the case with members of P2’s extended family.
P2’s chart shows that, for the most part, he is reliant on a small number of people to provide emotional and practical help. P2 has a large pool of support for positive situations/ emotions, such as people who make him feel proud, but he is more selective in his use of support in dealing with negative situations and emotions (e.g. anger, fail etc).

**POSAC Diagram**

P2’s Dependency Grid was statistically analysed using POSAC to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers. The table underneath the diagram is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.
Figure 12: P2’s POSAC Diagram

The chart shows a more complex set of dependency relationships in comparison with P1, with more interconnections between network members.

P2 has three primary helpers: female foster carer, teacher 2 and social worker who have a distinct supportive role from each other. P2’s female foster carer dominates the structure, which reflects her importance in meeting most of P2’s needs. Some of the support provided by female foster carer is also available from other sources that can be traced down from female carer.

Male foster carer is at a low position in the hierarchy and suggests that he provides help across fewer situations than those helpers above him. The
lateral position of male carer relative to uncle and P2’s friends suggest that male carer provides a distinct supportive role from this group of individuals.

Dependency on Dad is greater than other family members. Both sister and Mum are helpful in dealing with some of the situations to Dad but the fact that Mum and sister are not connected suggests that there are situations in which P2 would seek help from Mum but not sister and vice versa.

The chart suggests that foster sister 2 is differentiated from other foster siblings and appears to be an important and distinct supportive relationship.

P2’s friends are located towards the bottom of the hierarchy which shows that the support they provide is limited and unvaried. The grouping of these individuals suggests that P2 does not discriminate between his friends in terms of the support he can expect to receive from them.

4.6.2.3 Qualitative Interview

P2 was asked to explain some of his responses on the Dependency Grid.

Foster family

P2 felt he had a good relationship with his female carer. When asked why he would share his troubles and worries with his female carer, he said:

“I’m closer to her than anyone else.”

He was confident that his foster carer would take him seriously and address issues of bullying or problems with peers.

“They listen and would tell others. Other people would listen but they don’t tell anyone.”
P2 was also confident that his female carer would listen to him and help solve his problems:

“…because she always listens and…talks it out.”

The availability of his female carer was the reason given for P2’s dependency on her if he was unwell:

“because she is always at home.”

For practical reasons, P2 felt that his female carer was the best person to ask for money if he needed it:

“she always gives me my spends”

P2 felt that he could depend on his female carer and three foster siblings (foster sister 2 and foster brother 1 and foster brother 2) to support him if he was performing at an event. This was because:

“they’re the most important in my life”.

Female foster carer and foster sister 1 and foster sister 2 were seen as people who could support him with his school work because:

“they are clever or good at explaining things”.

Female foster carer and foster brother 1 and foster brother 2 were, in addition to members of P2’s birth family, people he could rely on to visit him in hospital. P2 attributed this to an emotional connection:

“I love them more than anyone else.”
On the issue of needing transport to get somewhere, P2 was quite practical in his decision-making, choosing his male foster carer and foster sister 2 because they were the only helpers with their own transport.

**Birth Family**

It was clear from P2’s comments during the interview that his birth family was very significant to him.

He chose his mum, dad and female foster carer as the people he could depend on if he was feeling sad or unhappy. He explained that this was:

“because I love them more than anyone else.”

P2 was confident that his mum, dad and siblings would support him if he was performing / participating in some activity or event. He said that this was:

“Because they’re the most important in my life.”

P2 thought his dad and sister would be good at helping him with his school work. He described them as:

“clever or good at explaining things”.

A number of helpers were regarded as helpful in ensuring that information is shared with relevant people to bring about change:

“They can tell [my] social worker and my mum and dad and all that.”
Self

P2 expressed a preference for dealing with situations himself, especially in dealing with anger:

“When I am angry I just go upstairs and everyone leaves me alone”.

P2 showed little dependency on other young people and expressed a preference for his own company e.g. If bored:

“I’d just stay in my room.” “I’ve got loads of things in my room.”

When asked about who would accompany him to an event he wanted to go to, he said:

“just do it by myself”

P2 also denied feeling lonely

“I’ve never been lonely”

Friends

P2 felt he could rely on his friends to ‘stick up for him’. P2 attributed this to contextual factors P2 felt that this was because of the amount of time he spent with them. It is possibly also a matter of context, as school is likely to be the main environment in which he would benefit from people who are prepared to advocate and support him:

“They’re right near me and that......they’re always like, following and that..home with me and always in school playing with me.”
Social worker

P2 felt that he could confide in his social worker and he felt that she was the best person to turn to if he was having problems with his carers:

“Because you can tell her anything and she won’t tell anyone else.”

His social worker and teacher 2 were also considered to be the best people to offer support on matters concerning his birth family. P2 explained that this was because they were:

“good at sorting things out.”

The Four Field Map

Figure 13 overleaf shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table underneath the diagram is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.
Figure 13 P2’s Four Field Map

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<td>Emotional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Nana</td>
<td>Granddad’s partner</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Friend 1</td>
<td>Friend 2</td>
<td>Brother</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Granddad</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Friend 5</td>
<td>Friend 6</td>
<td>Foster sister 3</td>
<td>Foster nephew</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nana</td>
<td>Granddad</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Friend 5</td>
<td>Friend 6</td>
<td>Foster sister 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
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<td>Foster carer (f)</td>
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</table>
The chart shows a poor relationship between emotional closeness and dependency. P2 is closest to his nana, granddad, dad, friend 1 and teacher 1 but he seeks little support from them. Female foster carer is the most supportive relationship but the relationship is not as close as his relationship with adult birth family members.

P2 feels less to close to his mum than his dad, and he feels closer to his sister than his brother. P2 appears to have a stronger relationship with his female foster carer than he does with his male foster carer.

4.6.2.4 Discussion of Analysis

P2 obtained a relatively high dispersion of dependency score using the uncertainty index, which suggests that P2 draws widely on the support of network members to meet his needs. P2 also obtained a high Uncertainty Coefficient score which points to a strong relationship between particular helpers and particular support needs. This interpretation of the grid data is confirmed by more detailed analysis.

P2’s female foster carer scored as his main source of support but it is clear from the Four Field Map and his comments during the qualitative interview that his birth family are very significant. P2’s mum, dad and sister hold significant positions within the dependency hierarchy and the Four Field Map and both measures point to differences in the nature of P2’s relationship with his mum and dad. In contrast, the Four Field Map suggests that P2’s male and female carers are of equal importance but the Dependency Grid points to differences in the way P2 construes his carers.

The position of teacher 1 and friend 1 as ‘close’ network members raises questions about the way in which the Four Field Map was interpreted and ultimately the validity of the findings. It’s possible that P2 has rated each helper relative to others in the same domain (e.g. school) rather than the network as a whole.
Overall, P2 appears to be more dependent on adult figures for support than friends, siblings and foster siblings, and he shows self reliance in situations where a person might ordinarily call on their friends.
4.6.3 Participant 3 (P3)

4.6.3.1 Biographical information

P3 came into care under a voluntary agreement due to family dysfunction, concerns about neglect, poor parenting and her mother’s drug misuse. P3 was living with her third set of foster carers and was reported to be quite settled. She had contact with her mum on a monthly basis but contact with her two sisters was irregular. It was recorded in her case file that:

‘...[she] does not invest in her family but needs to be supported to maintain a positive links’

4.6.3.2 Analysis of P3’s Dependency Grid

Figure 14 Number of situations each helper is turned to for support

![Bar chart showing the number of situations each helper is turned to for support. The chart is divided into practical and emotional support. The helpers include friends, family, and professionals. The chart shows that friends and family are major sources of support, while social workers and teachers are less utilized.]
According to figure 14, P3 would seek help from various individuals across a wide number of situations. Practical and emotional support is provided by virtually all the people in her support network. Friends are an important source of support for P3, particularly friends 3, 1, 7 and 8, on whom she is most reliant.

P3’s female foster carer is the most supportive adult in her network, and is closely followed by female birth family members: Aunt, Nana and Mum. Within the foster family, P3’s female foster carer provides slightly more support (2 more situations) than her male foster carer. P3’s foster brothers provide very little support, particularly foster brother 2.

P3’s teacher is perceived as a key member of her support network but she does not rely on the support of her social worker.
Figure 15 shows that P3 has access to multiple sources of support for a range of problems and situations. Support with transport or having someone to accompany her to an event or activity are the situations where support is limited but even in these circumstances there are at least four people she can rely on to provide this kind of support.

P3 has a wide range of support from people who make her feel valued, listened to and understood. She also considers herself to have a large group of people she can call on to help her manage negative moods (anger, sadness, boredom) but she is more discriminate in her use of support for dealing with troubles and worries.
POSAC Diagram

The completed Dependency Grid was statistically analysed to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers.

Figure 16 P3’s POSAC diagram

Figure 16 shows that P3 has four distinct primary sources of support:

- Friend 1, friend 3 and friend 7
- Female foster carer
- Male foster carer
- Nana/ aunty

P3’s friendship group dominates the structure. Friend 7, 3 and 6 are relied on the most. Their functions are available to a lesser degree from a subset of helpers lower down the chain.
The adult relationships are represented spatially as being a distinct group from the rest of the network, which consists mainly of young people. It suggests that P3 construes her adult relationships as different from her relationships with young people.

4.6.3.3 Qualitative Interview

P3 was asked to explain some of her responses on the Dependency Grid.

Friends and adults

P3 referred to her friends as helpful across a number of situations.

Friends were perceived as good at giving advice on matters of appearance:

“They’d tell you if something looked horrible, like, what you’re wearing and stuff.”

And they were well placed to offer help with school work due to their availability and knowledge of the subject matter.

“[my] friends can help because they go to most of my lessons”.

Friends were perceived as important in affecting and improving P3’s mood:

“usually makes us laugh”. “[I] don’t just sit and wimp in a corner.”

P3 dismissed adult support for managing anger:

“None of the adults”
Again she referred to the ability of friends to lighten her mood:

“because you can just talk to your mates and you end up laughing or having a laugh. And adults, like, take it seriously.”

Adults were perceived as being less helpful in these circumstances:

“…like…if they annoy you…they shout at you and then you do get annoyed and you shout back.”

Interestingly, this lighthearted response from her friends was not seen as very helpful in dealing with problems of a serious nature. P3 felt that a more mature response from adults was needed:

“my mates wouldn’t take us seriously. Adults would be sensible and mates would…just laugh and be mad at times……..encourage you to do it [more].”

P3 referred to her friends as important confidants and contrasted this with adults:

“Adults don’t keep secrets. They just pass it on. Like me mates. If someone said something to me and they said don’t tell anyone, I wouldn’t.”

P3 considered her friends to be a source of support if she was feeling unwell but she acknowledged that this preference was unrealistic:

“My friends would. But really they’d be at school.”
Relationship with foster brothers

P3 did not regard her foster brothers as particularly supportive. She her. For instance, on the issue of bullying, she commented:

“They’re not bothered….they don’t really care.”

P3 perceived them as being self-interested and concerned with their own pursuits:

“[foster brother 2] is only bothered about his air fix”.

Family Relationships

P3 talked very little about family members. The one exception was in reference to her nana’s support when performing in front of others:

“Nana lives [a long distance away] so it would be a struggle for her to see me. She’d be there if she was around”.

Four Field Map

Figure 17 overleaf shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table underneath the diagram is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.
Figure 17: P3’s Four Field Map

Emotional Support

Friend 3

Friend 4

Friend 5

Friend 6

Friend 7

Friend 8

Practical Support

Mum *
Foster carer (m) *
Foster carer (f) *
Sister 1 *
Sister 2 *
Cousin 1 *
Cousin 2 *
Friend 1 *
Friend 2 *
Mum
Foster carer (m)
Foster carer (f)
Sister 1
Sister 2
Cousin 1
Cousin 2
Friend 1
Friend 2
Friend 3
Friend 4
Friend 5
Friend 6
Friend 7
Friend 8

Teacher *
Nana *
Aunty *
Friend 3
According to figure 17 there is very little differentiation of relationships on the Four Field Map. With the exception of P3’s social worker, all members of P3’s support network occupy the first three areas of the map.

The Four Field Map suggests that P3’s closest relationships are with young people rather than adults. P3’s two sisters, cousin 1 and friend 1 and friend 2 occupy the first sector of the map. The data suggests that P3 has a closer relationship with her male and female foster carers than her birth mum.

The Four Field Map illustrates that adults are the main providers of practical support but adults and young people are key providers of emotional support.

### 4.6.3.4 Discussion of Analysis

P3’s Dependency Grid produced a high dispersion of dependency score, as measured using the Uncertainty Index. The Uncertainty Coefficient for the grid data was very low (0.13), which suggests that there is a poor relationship between helpers and support needs. The frequency of calls for help from different helpers, which is shown in P3’s bar chart indicates that there is no strong contrast between helpers. However, this is not borne out by the POSAC diagram.
P3’s dependency constructs distinguish between adult helpers and help provided by young people. P3 feels she can rely on her friends to meet most of her dependency needs, and consequently she is less reliant on her carers or other adults. This was supported by comments made during the qualitative interview which referred to unhelpful responses from adults in managing some situations.

To some extent the Four Field Map also shows this pattern of relating to adults and young people. P3 has close relationships with the young people in her life, as evident from the population of figures in the first two areas of the Four Field Map. P3’s adult relationships are recorded as being less close than many of her relationships with young people. Interestingly, P3’s foster carer described P3 as ‘difficult to know’ and would seem to reflect the pattern of relating to others described by the Dependency Grid and the Four Field Map.

P3’s relationship with her two foster brothers is recorded as being close but her comments and the individual scores on the Dependency Grid suggest that she does not have an easy relationship with them.

P3 did not seek support from her social worker nor did she express a great need to manage situations by herself.

One outcome from the qualitative interview that needs commenting on is its use as a check on the validity of the information entered on the Dependency Grid. During the course of the interview, P3 made several changes or corrections to her Dependency Grid to make it consistent with her views or constructs about these relationships.
4.6.4 Participant 4 (P4)

4.6.4.1 Biographical information

P4 came into care due to neglect and his father’s sexual abuse of his sister. P4 had been in care for six years and had spent five years with his current foster carers. He had contact with his mum and siblings four times a year but he had no contact with his birth father. P4’s brother and sister had significant learning difficulties. His brother was in receipt of specialist care.

4.6.4.2 Analysis of P4’s Dependency Grid

Figure 18 Number of situations each helper is turned to for support
Figure 18 shows that, with the exception of his foster carers and friend 2, most helpers are relied on for a limited range of support. P4 is most dependent on his foster carers, especially his female carer.

P4’s wider relationships offer emotional support but practical support is available only within the immediate foster family. There is limited support available from P4’s birth family and also these relationships are indistinguishable in terms of the quantity and quality of support.

It should be noted that P4 did not include his brother in his support network. He later told his foster carer that this was because of the nature of his relationship with his brother, who has severe and complex learning difficulties.

Figure 19 Number of helpers used in each situation

![Figure 19 Number of helpers used in each situation](image)
Figure 19 shows that P4 has a number of helpers he can turn to for support with each different event. There are several people he can turn to for support in relation to low mood, feeling upset, or just having people around during a sporting event or performance. Interestingly, P4 felt that he had a number of people who would support him if he was having problems with his family but he had limited support in dealing with problems with his carers.

The chart suggests that P4 has fewer people he can turn to for support with practical problems than emotional problems.

**POSAC Diagram**

The completed Dependency Grid was statistically analysed to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers.

**Figure 20 P4's POSAC diagram**
P4 has a fairly complex network of support due to the number of interconnections between network members.

P4’s support network consists of five independent chains of support:

- female foster carer
- male foster carer
- friend 2
- teacher
- social worker

P4’s female foster carer provides slightly more support than male foster carer and there are qualitative differences in the provision of support. Male foster carer is second in the hierarchical structure. Some of his supportive functions are also met by friend 1, friend 6 and foster brother.

Friend 2 has a unique supportive function in comparison with his other friends, whose supportive role overlaps with that of his carers.

Teacher is another independent chain of support, whose functions overlap with friend 1 and members of his carer’s extended family.

P4’s social worker is an important source of support and is in a superordinate position to birth mum and members of his foster carers extended family.

Friends 1, 2, and 6 are distinct sources of help for P4 but the structure suggests that there is little to differentiate friends 3, 4, 5, and 7.
4.6.4.3 Qualitative Interview

P4 was asked to explain some of his responses on the Dependency Grid.

Foster family

P4 said that he would seek help from his foster carers and foster siblings if he was having difficulty with his homework, because

“They’re quite intelligent”

His carers (teacher and Friend 2) were good at helping him manage his anger:

“Because they just like, calm me down.”

When explored further, P4 said they

“be nice to me and calms me down.”

P4 was confident that his carers would help him if he was being bullied.

Female foster carer and male foster carer (friend 2 and friend 6) were the people P4 felt he could turn to if he had troubles or worries:

“If I had done something wrong, they wouldn’t, like, have a go at me for it.”

They were also the people he would seek support from if he was in serious trouble as he felt that they would help him to think through the problem to find an appropriate solution:

“They’d talk to me and ask me what I’ve done and what I should have done and, like, sort it out.”
Both carers and P4’s foster brother were regarded as a potential source of support if he needed money. They were selected for practical reasons:

(Laughs) “they have like money.”

Friends

P4 said that he would seek support from his friends if he was looking to have a good time, or wanted someone to support him at an event or activity. Friends would also be used if P4 felt lonely:

“They’re the people I hang around with.”

[I’d use] “my friends really. Basically all my friends.”

Friends were also supportive if P4 failed at something:

“well Friend 2 helps me. “He wouldn’t take the mick out of me.”

Friend 2 was the only person P4 would share his secrets:

“I really could tell Friend 2.”

Friends were important for improving self-esteem:

“when we’re in the sports hall…I don’t want to go in net [goal keeper]. And I play for a team in net. And after, he [friend] says I done really good in it, and that makes me feel proud.”

P4 was confident that he had the support of his friends if he had problems with bullying:

“If someone calls me they [friends] would tell them off.”
**Four Field Map**

Figure 21 below shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table that follows the diagram is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.

**Figure 21 P4’s Four Field Map**

[Diagram of Four Field Map with labels for emotional and practical support, including names like Foster carer (f), Foster carer (m), Social worker, Teacher, Mum, Sister, and others.]
Figure 21 shows that P4’s male and female foster carers are among his closest relationships. P4 indicated that he would seek support from his foster carers more than any other person in his support network.

Most relationships are concentrated at position 1 or 2 of the diagram, which suggests that there is little differentiation of these relationships on the Four Field Map. P4 is less close to his two foster siblings and his female carer’s mother than his other relationships.

### 4.6.4.4 Discussion of Analysis

P4 had a relatively high dispersion of dependency score, as measured using the Uncertainty Index, which suggests that he looks for support from across his social network. The Uncertainty Coefficient produced a moderate score (0.26), which suggests that he does differentiate between his cast of helpers in meeting his needs. This description of the grid data by these summary measures is evident from figures 27 and 28, which show that P4 is mostly reliant on his carers for support.

There is some agreement between the Dependency Grid and the Four Field Map in terms of P4’s relationship with his carers and birth family. Both
measures pointed to P4’s integration in his foster carer’s family, with close
ties formed between P4 and his foster siblings and his carer’s parents.

Friends, teachers and social worker are also important sources of support. However, as with P2, the rating of teacher 1 and friend 1 and 2 on the Four Field Map as ‘close’ raises questions about the way in which P4 interpreted the instructions and it raises some doubts about the validity of some of the findings. It’s would seem that P4 has rated each helper relative to others in the same domain (e.g. school) rather than the network as a whole.

P4 made several changes to the grid when he was asked questions about his use of support during the qualitative interview. These changes ensured consistency between P4’s views and the quantitative data in the grid.
4.6.5 Participant 5 (P5)

4.6.5.1 Biographical information

P5 came into care in 2010 under a voluntary care arrangement (Section 20), after spending several months living between family and friends.

P5’s history was one of family dysfunction, exposure to domestic abuse, parental mental health and alcohol dependency. She had lived with her father for four years but moved in with her mother after she alleged she had been assaulted by her father. P5 had been excluded from high school and she’d had more than a year without any education.

P5 was pregnant when she took part in the study and had been living in a residential home for young people aged sixteen plus. She had separated from her unborn baby’s father and was in a relationship.

P5 ‘managed’ her own contacts with birth family. Her case file mentioned that she had a tense relationship with her mother and sisters and that there were ‘frequent fall outs’.
4.6.5.2 Analysis of P5’s Dependency Grid

Figure 22 Number of situations each helper is turned to for support

Figure 22 shows that P5 has a large network of support and that she has many people she can count on for support with a number of situations. P5’s boyfriend was the person she depended on most, closely followed by her mum.

The majority of people in P5’s support network provide both practical and emotional support, though practical support is in greater supply from boyfriend and birth mother.
We can see that residential care staff play a significant supportive role in P5’s life. P5’s birth dad is the fourteenth most supportive relationship. Birth dad provides support for fewer situations than friend 1, friend 2, birth mum, and sister 1, sister 2, and sister 3.

P5’s brothers and two half-sisters provide very little support. Nephew 1, nephew 2 and niece 2 are the only members of P5’s support network that do not provide support. Similarly, P5’s social worker was not perceived as a source of help for any of the twenty-five situations.

Figure 23 Number of helpers used in each situation
Figure 23 shows that P5 has a number of relationships that she can count on for support across a wide number of problems or situations. P5 is well supported by members of her support network in dealing with bullying and peer relationships but she has fewer people she can depend on for help with transport and help and advice in relation to her appearance. The list of supportive relationships is also small for situations where she is made to feel good or proud, having someone to accompany her to an event, and being visited at hospital.

**POSAC Diagram**

The completed Dependency Grid was statistically analysed to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers.

**Figure 24 P5's POSAC diagram**
Figure 24 shows a complex interconnected hierarchical structure dominated by boyfriend. P5’s boyfriend is the most significant source of support in P5’s hierarchy. All other relationships are subordinate to boyfriend as they provide some but not all of the supportive functions served by this relationship.

P5’s mum and dad are separated spatially in the structure, which suggests that P5 discriminates between her parents in terms of the help and support she can expect to receive from them.

The diagram shows three distinct groups below boyfriend and mum:

1. A group of friends and young people (on the left hand side)
2. A group of carers, Dad and niece
3. A group at the bottom of the structure consisting of some sibling relationships, extended family members, and social worker.

Which suggests that P5 construes these groups differently.

4.6.5.3 Qualitative Interview

P5 agreed with the interpretation about the significance of her relationship with her mother and boyfriend.

She said she was less sure of her other relationships:

“It’s the others I’m unsure about.”

Age was a factor that determined how useful a relationship was to P5. She felt that some younger members of her network were less helpful due to their young age, particularly her nieces and nephews and two younger sisters.
“[Sisters 3 and 4] are only kids themselves. They’re younger than me.”

Although there were not perceived as a source of practical support, P5 did perceive one niece as a helpful source of emotional support.

“[Niece 1, even though she’s a baby, her cuteness would get me out of a mood.”

Mum

P5 described her mum as a good source of emotional and practical support.

P5’s mum would help her if she were short of money. She described a strategy for obtaining money from her mum, when she needed it:

“My mum will….she won’t [give me money], but if I said, mum, would you ask your boyfriend if I can borrow some money, she’d go, I’m not asking because you know I don’t like asking him. I’ll lend it you. So basically I’ve got to….”

Interviewer: “Work on her?”

P5: “Yeah”

P5 told the interviewer that her mum had given her money so that she could buy baby clothes and equipment.

Boyfriends mum

P5 referred to her boyfriend’s mum as a source of practical support in preparing for her baby.
“[My boyfriend’s mum and boyfriend’s sister] are dead supportive. His mum’s bought me baby stuff”.

However, she explained that she would be reluctant to seek support from her boyfriend’s mum if she had troubles or worries:

“I don’t think I could go to his mum. I’d be too embarrassed.”

**Negotiating relationships- predicting and managing them**

“Sister 1 I can go to [for troubles and worries] but she grasses me up half the time [laughs]”.

**Sisters**

P5 appeared to have a difficult relationship with her half-sisters (sister 5 and 6).

P5 described them as “not clever enough” to help with school/college work.

“Sister 5, I wouldn’t ask her because she’s really, really dumb”.

“Sister 6 wouldn’t be clever enough”.

Later in the interview she referred to Sister (5):

“I don’t think we should really have her on here because she just ignores me. She’s my sister but she pretends I don’t exist.

P5 also commented that her two half-sisters were unhelpful in meeting her emotional needs.

“My sisters would just put me in a mood.”
In contrast, P5 perceived her full birth sisters as helpful and supportive.

On the subject of academic work, P5 said that she could seek support from sister 2:

“I’d actually go to sister 2 (with school work/ college work) because she’s quite clever.”

She referred to her three sisters as helpful in lifting her mood when she needed it (emotional support) and described sister 3 as quite protective. She described a situation where her sister had helped her in a fight with another girl.

**Dad**

P5 indicated that she had a difficult relationship with her father. She referred to her dad as unsupportive and unhelpful at times but she said that she had strong feelings towards him:

“I don’t see my dad that much. I love him to bits. I love him more than anything in this world but I don’t see anything of him.”

P5 felt that her father was critical of her. For instance, she said that she would not seek help from her dad if she was having difficulty with college work or school work because:

“he’d probably think I was dumb or something.”

Similarly, P5 perceived her dad’s lack of practical and financial support during the pregnancy as unfair:
“Me dad. When he first found out I was pregnant he said, I’m not paying for anything, right. You’re having no money off me blah blah blah. But yet, me sister, when she was pregnant he gave her everything.”

P5 was clear that she could not rely on her dad to ‘stick up for her’:

“Not me dad”.

She felt that could share her troubles and worries with her dad “sometimes” but she did not always value his advice. For instance, on the issue of needing support if she had problems with a peer or was being bullied, she said:

“I’m not marking me dad on that…he made me fight a load of girls once”

P5 did not feel that her dad had been particularly helpful in the past when she had been in serious trouble:

“The last time I got arrested I didn’t see him for three months. I didn’t want to face the music. The first time I ever got arrested I got a crack right around the face in the middle of the road. And I thought, I’m never doing that again. And then I went and got arrested twice after that.”

P5 did not perceive her dad as a source of fun. Indeed, she was rather confused by his lack of emotion at times:

“[His football team won the league] but he didn’t even cheer or anything. Weird!”
Friends
P5 said that she could rely on her friends for financial help and emotional support:

“I went through a bit of a rough stage not long ago. I told [friend 2] that I had no money and that my ex-boyfriend was causing a bit of trouble for me. So she turned round to me and gave me I think thirty-five quid. She’s always saying if you ever need anything I’m here for you.”

“[Friend 1] makes me feel better. She just slags everyone.”

Brothers

Help from brothers was limited by their availability:

“Same with my brothers [brother 1 and brother 2]. Brother 2 has been locked up, actually. If he wasn’t locked up and didn’t live so far away, we’d definitely help each other out.”

Boyfriend

P5 described her boyfriend as an important source of emotional and practical support. She referred to herself as being very dependent on him and she saw the relationship as important for her emotional wellbeing:

“If he doesn’t come up like, for the day, I’ll go in a horrible mood. And it’s because I’m attached to him, do you know, with being pregnant and everything. I’m really attached to him at the minute.”
“He’s not my baby’s dad but he’s been supportive and helped out with everything.”

Boyfriend was the only person whom P5 felt she could trust to keep a secret and was someone she could confide in.

P5 saw her boyfriend as quite resourceful and she turned to him for support with most problems, irrespective of whether he had the resources himself. For instance, P5 said that her boyfriend would help her to get to a venue or place on time if she needed to, even though he did not have a car and couldn’t drive.

“He wouldn’t be able to give me a lift but he’d get out [make sure I got there].”

Carers

P5 perceived her carers as helpful in meeting her emotional and practical needs. She discriminated between her carers based on their individual characters. All but one carer was seen as supportive if P5 was feeling angry:

“If I’m angry she just has a go at me.”

Interviewer: “She winds you up?”

“She doesn’t wind me up; she just puts me in a straight place.”

Although this carer was not perceived as helpful to P5 in managing her anger, she was a good person for P5 to share her troubles and worries with, as she was someone who would take matters seriously. In contrast, P5
described one of her male carers as good humoured. She referred to this carer as:

“more of a jokey person”.

This was perceived as a good attribute in her male carers for improving her mood and making her feel better about things but she felt it was less helpful if she needed support around particular worries and concerns.

Social worker

“She doesn’t do anything….I’ve had more support off me family.”
Four Field Map

Figure 25 below shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table overleaf is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.

Figure 25 P5's Four Field Map
The Four Field Map reveals that P5 feels closest to her boyfriend and her parents. P5 is least close to her brothers and her half-sisters (sister 5 and sister 6).

The chart shows a poor relationship between the closeness of P5’s relationships and the quantity of support.

4.6.5.4 Discussion of Analysis

P5’s Dependency Grid achieved a mid range score for sample on the dispersion of dependency, as measured using the Uncertainty Index. It suggests that she can rely on the support of several helpers but she does not make full use of the people listed in her support network. The uncertainty coefficient was calculated as 0.22, which suggests that there is some relationship between particular helpers and particular support needs. This statistical interpretation of the grid data is supported by a detailed analysis of the grid data which was presented in figures 22, 23 and 24.

P5’s boyfriend scored as her closest relationship and she was very dependent on her boyfriend for support. P5’s mum was a prominent figure who served as an alternative source of support to boyfriend.
P5’s Four Field Map shows a poor relationship between the closeness of her relationships and dependency. This was most easily illustrated by her comments in relation to her father. P5 felt close to her dad but she did not regard him as a potential helper for many of the situations listed in the grid. P5’s comments during the qualitative interview highlighted a number of tensions in her relationships with various family members and are consistent with the biographical information.
4.6.6 Participant 6 (P6)

4.6.6.1 Biographical information

P6 had been living with the same carers since she came into care, six years ago. P6 was subject to a Voluntary Care Order (Section 20) following a history of parental alcohol misuse and neglect.

P6 was not in contact with her mother and her mother’s whereabouts was unknown. P6 had stated to social workers that she did not want to see her mother until she was abstinate.

P6’s case file described her as:

‘A young woman with a mature outlook on life and her circumstances..........[she] has a good relationship with her female foster carer and she appears able to seek guidance and support from her.’
4.6.6.2 Analysis of P1’s Dependency Grid

Figure 26 Number of situations each helper is turned to for support

According to Figure 26, female foster carer provides the most support followed by male foster carer. Both relationships are significant in meeting P6’s practical needs, as other than teacher 1, no other relationship is perceived as helpful in providing this type of support.

The chart also illustrates the significance of P6’s foster sisters. P6’s brother and his partner were the most significant birth family members in P6’s list, followed by her grandparents and nephew.
Friend 1 is the most supportive friend in P6’s network. Several friends were recorded as ‘important’ people in her life but they did not score on the Dependency Grid. This group of friends were people P6 mixed with at a community group.

**Figure 27 Number of helpers used in each situation**

![Figure 27](image)

Figure 27 shows that P6 is dependent on a small number of resources (helpers) to meet her individual needs. P6 is reliant on just 2-3 people to provide help with practical needs but there are a number of people she can rely on for emotional support. P6 can expect to receive help from a large number of people for social needs, such as a hospital stay or performing in front of others but there is only one person she can depend on for help in dealing/managing anger.
POSAC Diagram

The completed Dependency Grid was statistically analysed to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers.

Figure 28 P6′s POSAC diagram

Figure 28 shows that female foster carer is P6′s main source of support and there is a complex, interconnected network of supporters who provide alternative support to female foster carer.

Brother and Friend 1 are separate chains of support in the diagram, indicating that they provide support for situations that are not met by female foster carer and each other.
P6’s male foster carer is an alternative source of support to female foster carer, teacher and social worker.

The diagram suggests that P6’s relationship with foster sister 2 may be different to foster sister 1. Foster sister 2 forms part of a chain of support running through P6’s friends, whereas foster sister 1 is aligned with teacher 2 and friend 4.

The POSAC diagram shows a distinct group of friends to the left of the structure. It suggests that P6 construes the support from this group of friends as different from the main network.

4.6.6.3 Qualitative Interview

P6 was asked to explain some of her responses on the Dependency Grid. The interview was tape recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions are used to illustrate particular points.

**Foster carers**

P6 said that she would seek support from her carers (and teacher) if she was having problems with her homework. Her explanation referred to their availability rather than any personal qualities:

“cause they’re there.”

P6 was very clear that she would not seek support from her foster carers if she was having problems with her birth family. She indicated that it was something she would keep to herself:

“I don’t really speak to..like, carers about my family. I prefer just to keep it.....”
**Brother and foster sisters**

P6 talked positively about her brother. She felt that her brother and foster sisters would offer encouragement and moral support if she was participating in an event. This was just something that was expected, given their close relationship:

“Because they’re my brothers and sisters. They come to see me and I go to there’s.”

**Self**

P6 indicated that she would manage any angry feelings herself rather than seek the support from others.

She also suggested that she would manage any issues concerning her birth family herself.

**Friends**

P6 had two sets of friends: school friends and a group of friends that she socialised with in the community. She reported that she was closest to her school friends than her community friends. This ‘closeness’ explained why she chose to spend time with her school friends rather than her community friends if she was feeling bored.

Friends were an important source of advice on aspects of her appearance:

“friends tell me what looks good.”
P6 felt that she could share her worries and concerns with friends. She said that her friends were the best people to seek support from when something is troubling her or worrying her:

“They’re like my close friends in school and I can speak to them at school.”

Availability was the main reason given for seeking support from her friends if she had problems with school work.

“cause they’re there.”

Friend 5

P6 was asked about her friendship with friend 5, as her completed Dependency Grid indicated that she could share a secret with this person but P6 did not rely on friend 5 for anything else:

“Me and friend 5 are quite close but we don’t always talk to each other.”

Interviewer: I’m just interested in why you’d share a secret with friend 5 but you wouldn’t get other help from her.

“cause...... she’s quite careful with things like that”.

Granddad and Grandma

Grandma and granddad were viewed as helpful in supporting P6 with failure. She explained:

“because they’re quite caring towards me.”
Four Field Map

Figure 29 below shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table overleaf is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.

Figure 29 P6's Four Field Map
The Four Field Map shows that P6 feels close to her carers and friend 1 and friend 2. P6’s relationship with her teacher and social worker is more distant. Among birth family members, P6 is closer to her brother and brother’s partner than her grandparents.

The chart shows some relationship between the provision of social support and the closeness of the relationship but it is not a strong relationship.

4.6.6.4 Discussion of Analysis

P6 has a relatively high dispersion of dependency score, as measured using the Uncertainty Index. It suggests that she seeks support from a number of supporters in meeting her needs. P6 also obtained a high Uncertainty Coefficient score. This points to a strong relationship between particular helpers and particular support needs. This interpretation of the grid data is corroborated by more detailed analysis.

P6’s female foster carer was her main source of support and it was also one of her closest relationships, as measured by the Four Field Map. P6’s had a close relationship with her male foster carer but she was less dependent on

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her male carer compared to her female carer. This distinction was not evident from her comments during the qualitative interview and would need further exploration.

P6’s birth parents did not feature in her support network and were not involved in her life. This was explained in the biographical information.

P6’s friends were an important source of emotional support, particularly friend 1 who scored as a close relationship on the Four Field Map. P6 had a close group of friends at school and a set of friends in the community. The role or significance of this community group of friends is unclear and needs further investigation, as it suggests that they may have a supportive role which is not captured by the Dependency Grid interview.
4.6.7 Participant 7 (P7)

4.6.7.1 Biographical information

P7 had quite an unsettled care history. He came into care in 2009 on a voluntary care order because of his challenging behaviour. His mother had struggled to manage his behaviour after his father left the family home. P7 was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes and his behaviour placed him at risk of significant harm.

After a short, unsuccessful spell in two foster care placements, P7 was placed in a residential school. He moved to three other residential placements following two failed attempts to rehabilitate him home. P7 was eventually placed with his maternal aunt after he absconded from his residential placement and refused to return. He had been living with his aunt and her partner for eight months when, just before I was due to see him, the placement broke down and P7 was moved to his fifth placement, which was a residential children’s home.

P7 was described in a psychological report as being insecure about his relationships. He could be quite controlling of others, particularly towards his mother, and this had affected his school attendance and behaviour.

P7 was in regular contact with his mother and he frequently went missing from school to visit her. P7 had only recently starting having contact with his father after a period of several years.
4.6.7.2 Analysis of P7’s Dependency Grid

Figure 30 Number of situations each helper is turned to for support

Figure 30 shows that P7’s main source of support is his mum. However, her role only extends to half of all problems and situations listed in the grid. Mum provides support for a greater number of emotional events than other helpers but there is little difference in the amount of practical help provided by mum compared to some other people. The chart also shows a high level of self-reliance when it comes to dealing with a number of problems and situations.

P7’s grandparents, two aunts, aunty’s partner and a number of extended family members provide support for approximately a quarter of all problems and situations listed in the Dependency Grid.
The chart shows that P7’s birth father provides help for fewer situations than birth mum and extended family members. Support from birth sister and brother is minimal. Sister is perceived as a source of practical and emotional help but P7’s brother, a young baby, makes a small contribution to P7’s emotional needs.

The chart suggests that adult family members provide greater support than friends. Friend 8 and Friend 7 were the most supportive individuals from amongst his set of friends. Friend 8 was the only friend to provide practical help as well as emotional support.

Mother’s partner was perceived as the least helpful of all adults connected with his family.

P7 did not perceive his carers as a source of help with emotional issues. He saw them only as a limited source of practical support.
Figure 31 shows the number of helpers that are perceived as being helpful in providing support for different events and situations.

The chart shows that there are a number of emotional problems or situations where P7 has very few people he can depend on for support. These include specific emotions (anger, upset) and relationship problems (e.g. problems with bullying, problems with carers and problems with family). P7 has more support for social needs, such as having someone to accompany him at an event or having people he can rely on to visit him in hospital. In terms of practical support, P7 has a number of people he can turn to for money, personal care if he is unwell, and for problems with school work. However, he has fewer people he can call on for help with transport.
or keeping appointments, or advice and support with forms and written communication.

**POSAC Diagram**

The completed Dependency Grid was statistically analysed to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers.

**Figure 32: P7’s POSAC diagram**

In figure 32 there are six helpers who provide unique and separate support from each other. These are Mum, Self, Nana, Friend 8, Carers, and Social worker. Mum dominates the structure and is turned to for help more frequently and for a greater range of situations than any other helper. There are several family members who serve as alternative helpers to Mum in some situations. Dad is a limited source of support but he is more helpful than Mum’s partner.
P7’s sibling relationships provide little support, which in the case of his baby brother is unsurprising.

The chart shows that friends are differentiated from other helpers, and that friends are turned to for help in dealing with a common set of situations.

P7’s carers and helpers provide a limited range of support but they provide exclusive support for one or more situations.

4.6.7.3 Qualitative interview

P7 was asked to explain some of the underlying reasons for choosing some people for support over others. He found this process difficult and was unable to verbalise his discriminations.

Mum

P7 was unable to explain why his mum was such an important source of help and support. The interviewer offered the suggestion that mum was a good listener and maybe understood him. P7 agreed.

Interviewer: Why would you go to mum and not others?”

P7: Shakes his head.

Interviewer: Mum is a good listener. She understands you?

P7: Mmm.
Nana

P7’s nana was the only person selected who would make him feel better if he was feeling sad. The decision to seek support from his nana was based on past experience:

“Dunno. She just has done a couple of times, so I just put her.”

When asked how his nana could help him feel better, he said:

“Dunno….she’ll make me a brew”

Auntie

P7 said that he would not seek help from his aunty with school work because he didn’t think that she would be able to help him:

“she didn’t get any homework [when she was at school]”

But he considered his sister to be a potential source of support with school work because:

“she’s pretty smart”

Self

P7 had indicated in the grid that he would not turn to others for help if he found himself in serious trouble. He nodded when this was discussed but did not give any reason for this.

On the matter of sharing secrets, P7 said that he had chosen himself for this item as he did not share secrets with others.
“Don’t share secrets”

Interestingly, P7 suggested that he would just rely on his television if he was ever unwell rather than the support of a caregiver.

“Just me tele”

Social Worker

P7’s completed Dependency Grid indicates that his social worker can be helpful with certain problems. He saw her as particularly helpful in dealing with issues related to his care placement. His explanation was based on her professional role rather than any psychological characteristic:

“because she’s my social worker and if I’ve got a problem, I’ll speak to her.”

P7 was asked if his social worker was good at responding to problems. He said:

“Sometimes.”

Friends

P7 had selected his friends as the people he would seek out if he wanted to have a good time. He also felt that he could rely on them to stick up for him but he could not explain why he could rely on friends and not others to do this. P7 appeared to base his decision on past experience:

“Hmmm. Dunno. I know they have once [stuck up for him] but I can’t remember [what it was about]. It was in school.”

Some friends were not selected as people he would turn to for fun:
“Half of these don’t go out”

P7 referred to a lack of reciprocity in his relationship with his friends, which he used to justify why he would not rely on them for financial assistance:

“I don’t give them (friends) any so they wouldn’t give me any”

**Four Field Map**

Figure 33 overleaf shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table that follows the diagram is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.
Figure 33: P7's Four Field Map

- Mum *
- Dad *
- Aunty 1 *
- Aunt’s partner *
- Aunty 2 *
- Nana *
- Granddad *
- Brother *
- Dad
- Mum
- Aunty 1
- Aunt’s partner
- Aunty 2
- Nana
- Granddad
- Sister
- Friend 1
- Friend 8
- Carers
- Friend 7
- Friend 8
- Social worker *
According to figure 33, P7’s closest relationship is with his mother. The chart shows little differentiation between members of the network except in making a distinction between family and non-family members. With the exception of Mum, all family members are positioned in the second area from the centre. P7 placed his friends, carers and social worker outside the concentric circles to indicate an emotional distance or connection with these people.

### 4.6.7.4 Discussion of Analysis

A relatively high dispersion of dependency score was found for P7’s Dependency Grid. It suggests that P7 seeks support from a large number of people in his personal network. However, his Uncertainty Coefficient score was among the highest for the sample and points to a strong relationship between particular helpers and particular support needs. This interpretation of the grid data is supported by more detailed analysis.
P7’s mum is his closest relationship and also his main source of help and support but he is dependent on his mum for only half of all the situations and problems listed in the grid. P7 was more self-reliant than other participants and this may reflect his unsettled history of being in care. For P7, being independent may be preferable to having to depend on adult figures whose availability is uncertain.

The care provided by aunt 1 and her partner is reflected in the grid by the number of dependencies allocated to them. This is less evident from the bar chart but is more evident from the hierarchical diagram.

P7 had only been in his care placement for two weeks when he completed the Dependency Grid. P7 had not had sufficient time to develop any relationship with his carers and therefore it is not surprising that his carers registered as a weak source of support on the Dependency Grid. P7 only relied on them for help with practical problems.

The Four Field Map shows that P7 has a close emotional tie with his dad. The Dependency Grid analysis suggests that Dad is not a primary source of support. This will in part, be due to P7’s dad’s absence from his life but is perhaps also a reflection of P7’s assumptions about his father’s willingness and ability to provide support in different circumstances.

The difference in support offered by P7’s sister and his brother can be attributed to their ages and the nature of P7’s relationship with them. P7’s brother is an infant and would therefore offer little in the way of help and support. In contrast, P7’s sister is a preadolescent girl whom P7 had grown up with.

P7 chose not to put his social worker and friends on the Four Field Map and by doing so, it gives the impression that these relationships are unimportant. P7’s Dependency Grid shows that his social worker and friends were helpful to him in managing a number of situations.
4.6.8 Participant 8 (P8)

4.6.8.1 Biographical information

P8 was in care on a full care order (section 31) and had been in local authority care for seven years. P8 and her brother were taken into care following a history of sexual abuse, exposure to domestic violence and parental alcohol misuse.

P8 had had four foster care placements since she came into care. Two of these were short-term placements. P8 had been living with her current carer for five years and was reported to be quite settled. P8’s younger brother was living in a separate foster care placement.

P8 had a statement of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (difficulties with peer relationships, attention-seeking behaviours, anxiety and self-harm).

According to social care case files, P8 had a ‘warm’ relationship with her father, who she saw six times a year. P8 had a difficult relationship with her mother and in fact she had stopped seeing her mum at contact. It was reported that P8 felt angry towards her mum for ‘letting her down and for failing to keep her promises’. She also felt angry about her lost childhood, and she accused her parents of being ‘too pissed’ to look after her.

P8 agreed to take part in this research after some encouragement from her foster carer. She was seen at her foster carer’s address as she did not want to be interviewed at school.

P8 would only consider her foster carer and her friend (her foster carer’s niece) as sources of support. She did not want to include members of her family and was evasive when asked about other relationships. The
Dependency Grid and Four Field Map were completed using these two people and ‘self’.

### 4.6.8.2 Analysis of P8’s Dependency Grid

**Figure 34 Number of situations each helper is turned to for support**

According to Figure 34, P8’s foster carer and friend are turned to for support over an equal number of situations but they differ in the type of support they provide. P8’s carer is available for more practical situations than her friend but her friend provides slightly more emotional support, as measured by the number of situations with an emotional element.

P8’s social worker features as a source of emotional support and there are a number of situations which P8 would choose to manage by herself.
Figure 35 shows that P8 has maximum support for dealing with peer/bullying issues but she is more selective when it comes to relieving boredom, needing people to ‘stick up for her,’ having people to care for her when she is unwell, and ensuring she does not miss important appointments.
POSAC Diagram

The completed Dependency Grid was statistically analysed to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers.

Figure 36 P8's POSAC diagram

P8 has a simple hierarchical profile due to the limited size of her support network. Though it is not evident from the plot above, POSAC identified friend and foster carer as independent providers of support, as they each provide support for one or more situations than are met by the other. The spatial arrangement of social worker and self reflect differences in the frequency of calls made on them and is consistent with figure 34. However, friend is positioned in a superordinate position to foster carer which does not appear to reflect the grid data. It would be expected that foster carer and friend would hold equal positions along the y axis but might be shown in different positions along the x axis to reflect qualitative differences in the
provision of support. This anomaly in the analysis by POSAC may be due to the small grid size.

4.6.8.3 Qualitative Interview

P8 was asked to explain some of her responses on the Dependency Grid. The interview was tape recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions are used to illustrate particular points.

P8’s interview was relatively short as she had few people to consider and her responses were often brief. The interview, including questions about the utility of the Dependency Grid lasted little more than 25 minutes.

Friend

P8’s friend was in fact her foster carer’s niece. She reported that they had a good relationship. They spent a lot of time in each other’s company, either at each other’s home or at the gym, and it was clear that P8 valued this friendship.

There was mutual respect when it came to advice on matters of fashion and appearance:

“We give each other [advice], really.”

P8 said that she would turn to her friend if she was feeling low or had particular worries:

“I’d go round to [friend] and we’d just talk and that.

But she recognised that her friend was not always sympathetic:

“...sometimes she can’t be bothered”.

200
Interviewer: So she can’t be bothered to listen to you, is that what you mean?

“[laughs] yeah. Like..cause I constantly go on with myself.”

Foster carer

P8 seemed very close to her foster carer.

P8 was confident that her carer would support her with a number of problems and situations.

Social Worker

P8’s social worker was a relatively weak source of support but P8 felt that she could count on her social worker for some problems and situations.

P8 named her social worker as one of the people who make her feel proud and good about herself:

“I don’t know. [She] Just says good things and makes me feel better about myself.”

Four Field Map

Figure 37 shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table underneath the diagram is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.
Figure 37 P8's Four Field Map

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- Foster carer (f)
- Friend
- Social worker

* * *
The Four Field Map shows that P8 has a close relationship with her foster
carer and friend. The relationship with her social worker is recorded as
more distant, with social worker placed outside the series of concentric
circles. Both friend and foster carer can be relied on for emotional and
practical support.

4.6.8.4 Discussion of Analysis

P8’s completed Dependency Grid and Four Field Map show the importance
of her foster carer and her friend. This is consistent with information from
P8’s social worker and her case file notes.

P8’s case is useful in showing some of the limitations of the assessment
and analysis, as it relies on the willingness of interviewees to report on their
social network. P8’s social network was not as limited as portrayed by the
Dependency Grid and Four Field Map. She alluded to a number of other
relationships, including members of her birth family and friends, and foster
siblings, but she was unwilling to include these figures in the assessment.
Clearly this has implications for the accuracy of the Dependency Grid.

In view of the emotional difficulties relating to P8’s personal history and her
troubled family relationships, particularly her relationship with her mother, it
is not surprising that she chose to focus on the ‘safe’ relationships of her
foster carer and friend. However, it is surprising that she chose not to
include her father, given that it is reported that she had a good relationship
with him.

The anomaly in the representation of foster carer and friend by POSAC
suggests that the program may be less helpful with small grids.
4.6.9 Participant 9 (P9)

4.6.9.1 Biographical information

P9 and his three brothers came into care because of neglectful parenting. Assessments on file described P9 as protective of his siblings and his mother. P9 had separate contact with his mother from his siblings as it was recognised that he was quite needy of his mother’s attention.

P9 had been living with his foster carers for six months on an interim care order when he completed the Dependency Grid. He was aware that the Local Authority had initiated care proceedings and that decisions were being made about his future care. P9 was aware that birth father, whom P9 had not seen for over two years, had asked for P9 to be placed with him.

4.6.9.2 Analysis of P9’s Dependency Grid

Figure 38: Number of situations each helper is turned to for support
P9’s chart shows that he is most reliant on his mum and nana but they only provide support for just over half the number of situations listed in the grid (52%). Although they provide support for an equal number of situations, mum provides greater practical support than nana and nana provides greater emotional support than mum.

The chart shows a disparity in the amount of support provided by mum and nana compared with P9’s other relationships. P9’s social worker is joint second in the order of supportive relationships, which suggests that this is an important relationship. Indeed, social worker is ranked higher than P9’s male and female foster carers. P9 indicated that he would not seek support from his male foster carer. His female foster carer is the fifth most used helper but her role is largely limited to the provision of practical support.

P9’s dad and brothers offer limited support in comparison with other members of the family.

The chart shows differences in the use of peer support, with friend 1 providing most support to P9 and friend 5 the least support.
Figure 39 Number of helpers used in each situation

Figure 39 shows that, for the most part, P9 has several helpers he can turn to for help with different situations. However, he is more selective when seeking help with transport, problems with his family, boredom and sharing a secret.

**POSAC Diagram**

The completed Dependency Grid was statistically analysed to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers.
P9 has a relatively simple structure to his support network. There are few interconnections, which suggests that there is little overlap between members of the support network in terms of the support they offer. The POSAC diagram shows that Mum, Nana and Granddad are independent chains of support in P9’s hierarchy. This means that each helper provides support for some situations that the others do not.

Mum and Nana occupy dominant positions in the hierarchy, with most other people serving as an alternative source of support.

Female foster carer is subordinate to Mum and Nana in the hierarchy but she provides support for a greater number of situations than male foster carer.
Social worker, self and foster brother are end points in the chains of support. The lack of convergence means that they provide support that is different from other network members who occupy the lowest positions in the hierarchy.

### 4.6.9.3 Qualitative Interview

P9 was asked to explain some of his responses on the Dependency Grid. The interview was tape recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions are used to illustrate particular points.

**Mum and Nana**

P9 said that he would seek help with homework from his mum or his nana as they are both “clever” and willing to help him.

He felt his nana would be supportive if he was being bullied:

> “she’d say just ignore them”.

But he did not think that his mum would offer useful help or advice:

> “[Mum] just says if they do it again, fight back”.

P9 felt that his nana and mum cared about him and would help him if he had troubles or worries:

> “cause they’re always there for me.”

Mum and nana offered support to P9 in managing his angry feelings. He mentioned that they had talked to him about using different strategies to control his temper:
“They tell me, like, count to ten or go out or do something.”

Dad

P9 did not think that his dad would be particularly helpful if he was being bullied. This was largely due to the fact that his dad was unaware of what was going on for him in his life:

“That doesn’t really know about anything.”

Dad and mum were seen as providing financial help based on his experience of receiving money from them:

“because they always give me money”

Brothers

P9 said that brother 1 and brother 2 could lift his mood when he is feeling sad, as:

“They’re dead funny”

P9 did not think his brothers would be particularly helpful with homework due to their young age:

“They’re at primary school and can’t do my work”.

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Granddad

P9 perceived his grandfather as someone who would offer encouragement if he failed at something:

“He’d (grandfather) just go, if you fail, try and try again.”

However, granddad’s availability was seen as a factor when considering who he could rely on to care for him if he was unwell:

“not my granddad because my granddad is always working.”

Friends

P9 felt that his friends would offer support if he was being bullied. He mentioned that he had been friends with friend 1 for some time, which implied a degree of commitment to each other:

“(Friend 1 has) been my mate since start...since i started here.”

P9 said that he would draw on the support of his friends if he was feeling lonely. He could also count on his friends to accompany him to an event that he did not want to attend by himself. He did, however, point out that the type of activity or event would influence his decision about who he would ask to support him, as some friends were not particularly sporty and were less likely to agree to attend a sporting event.

Foster brother

P9 said that his foster brother was someone he could turn to if he was bored and wanted to have a good time, and he was someone who could cheer him up if he was feeling sad. This was mainly because his foster brother owned
an X-box rather than because of any particular quality or personal characteristic.

Self

P9 said he would deal with some problems by himself. He indicated that if he had problems with his carers he would deal with this himself but he couldn’t explain why he would not use other people.

P9 would keep secrets to himself rather than share them with others. He interpreted this question as an issue of disclosure rather than a matter of trust and having someone who could keep his confidence:

“I don’t [share secrets] . I’m not a snitch”.

P9 indicated on the Dependency Grid that he would deal with a serious problem himself. However, when he was asked about this, he amended the grid and explained that he would seek support from his social worker. He was vague about his reason for choosing his social worker over other people

“[Social worker] can help me.”

Social worker

P9 had a positive view of his social worker. The fact that his social worker had seen the family through its ups and downs seemed to be an important factor:

“She’s been there….been there for so long.”
The infrequent contact between P9 and his social worker was offered as the main reason why he would not seek help from his social worker with other situations:

“She doesn’t come round much.”

Four Field Map

Figure 41 below shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table overleaf is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.

Figure 41 P9’s Four Field Map
P9’s Four Field Map indicates that he feels close to his mum, nana and granddad. He is less close to his siblings but his sibling relationship is rated higher than his relationship with his father.

The Four Field Map shows the importance of friends and social worker. Interestingly, P9 rated his relationship with his foster carer’s son (foster brother) as more significant than his relationship with his female foster carer and male foster carer. Indeed, both male and female foster carer are positioned outside the concentric circles.

It is evident from the chart that it is mainly adults who provide P9 with practical support. Age does not appear to be a factor in the provision of emotional support but P9 is more dependent on people he feels close to than more distant relationships.

4.6.9.4 Bene Anthony Test of Family Relations (Bene, 1985)

P9 had completed the Bene Anthony Test of Family Relations (Bene, 1985) shortly before he had taken part in this research and the results are presented here so that they may be compared with the findings from the Dependency Grid and the Four Field Map.
The Bene Anthony Test of Family Relations is designed to explore family relations. The child is asked to select line drawings of figures to represent family members and then to allocate emotional messages to them. There is a ‘Mr Nobody’ figure which is included in the test to provide an alternative in situations where the child does not wish to allocate a statement to a particular family member or significant other.

The test is usually interpreted from a psychodynamic perspective with reference to defense mechanisms in the way items are allocated. The number of items a child allocates to an individual is taken as a measure of how emotionally significant the person is to the child.

The results of the Bene Anthony Family Relations Test: Older Children’s Version are presented in Table 9.

Table 9 shows the number of statements allocated to each family member and P9’s foster carers. The statements refer to positive or negative emotional content and the direction of felt emotions (i.e. whether it was P9’s feelings towards others or other people’s feelings towards P9).
Table 9 Bene Anthony Test of Family Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Outgoing Positive</th>
<th>Outgoing Negative</th>
<th>Incoming Positive</th>
<th>Incoming Negative</th>
<th>Degree of emotional involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nana</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granddad</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female foster carer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male foster carer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Nobody</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 suggests that Nana is the most significant person in P9’s life, followed by his granddad and mum. P9’s father is the least significant adult member of the family. P9’s relationship with his mum showed an imbalance in terms of the exchange of positive emotions. There were a greater number of outward positive emotions expressed towards mum compared with the number that were received by P9 from his mum.

P9 did not allocate any negative items to his nana and granddad, which according to the test manual can indicate that the child has an idealised view of his relationship.
P9’s scores on the The Family Relations Test suggest that he has a stronger relationship with brother 1 and brother 2 than brother 3, who received no items on the Family Relations Test.

The allocation of test items to the Mr Nobody figure suggests that P9 has responded defensively when assigning the negative items. It can be seen that statements of a strong negative emotional content were assigned to Mr Nobody rather than to a member of the family.

4.6.9.5 Discussion of Analysis

P9 obtained a mid range score for the sample using the Uncertainty Index as a measure of dispersion, which suggests that he can count on the support of a number of people from his support network. P9’s high Uncertainty Coefficient score indicates that helpers are selected according to their ability to meet specific needs. This interpretation of the grid data is supported by more detailed analysis.

There is broad agreement between the Dependency Grid, the Four Field Map and the Bene Anthony Test of Family Relations regarding the significance of P9’s relationship with his nana, mum, and granddad, and the weak relationship with his dad and his male and female carers.

The Four Field Map, Dependency Grid and the Bene Anthony Test of Family Relations concur that P9’s sibling relationships are less significant than his relationship with his nana, mum and granddad but are more significant than his relationship with his dad and his foster carers. The Four Field Map does not, however, differentiate between P9’s sibling relationships. All three siblings are positioned in the second concentric circle on the Four Field Map. However, on the Dependency Grid, brother 2 and brother 3 provide support for one situation more than brother 1 (makes you feel better when you’re feeling sad) but P9 indicated that he was more
emotionally involved with brother 1 and brother 2 than brother 3 on the Bene Anthony Test of Family Relationships. Indeed brother 3 did not score at all on the Family Relations Test. Of course, it would be remarkable if differences were not found between the Bene Anthony Test of Family Relations and the Dependency Grid as they are not equivalent measures. The Dependency Grid is a measure of help seeking behaviour and does not directly assess negativity in relationships. In contrast, the significance of each relationship to an individual on the Family Relations Test is defined by the number of negative and positive emotional messages that are exchanged. This may explain the different findings in relation to brother 1. On the Bene Anthony Test of Family Relations, the high involvement with brother 1 over brother 2 and 3 is due to differences in the number of negative emotional items. As negativity is assessed indirectly on the Dependency Grid by the absence of the individual as a source of support, it can be inferred that brother 1 is unhelpful in situations where brother 2 and brother 3 are a source of help. On P9’s Dependency Grid, this was in relation to the item on people who make you feel better when you’re feeling sad. It is relevant that P9 was living with brother 1 when the research and assessments were conducted and this ‘negative’ aspect of their relationship may be considered normal among siblings.

P9’s immediate future was uncertain and this uncertainty combined with the short period of time spent with his current carers (6 months) probably explains why his psychological and emotional ties to his birth family are so significant and why he shows little dependency on his foster carers. P9’s history of neglect and his reluctance to invest in his relationship with his carers probably explains why he is more willing than most, to manage problems and situations himself.
4.6.10 Participant 10 (P10)

4.6.10.1 Biographical information

P10 had been in care for six years and had been living with his current carers throughout this time. Prior to coming into care, P10 had been looked after by various family members, as his mother had struggled to parent him because of her own vulnerabilities. P10 was cared for by his maternal aunt in Australia but after about a year he returned to the UK to live with his maternal grandmother. He was taken into care on a voluntary basis when his grandmother fell ill and needed hospital treatment. Sadly, P10’s grandmother passed away and with no family members able or willing to care for him, he remained in care.

P10 was reported to be quite settled in his placement and he had a good relationship with his carers and his foster siblings. His foster carers were very fond of him and had applied for a Special Guardianship Order (SGO). P10 was doing well at school and had a small number of friends in school and the army cadets.

P10 had contact with his mum and uncle but this was fairly irregular due to his mum’s chaotic lifestyle and the fact that his uncle lived some distance away. P10 was not in contact with his birth father and his whereabouts were unknown. P10’s mother had described his father as a ‘dangerous’ man.

In personality, P10 was described as a bit of a ‘worrier’ and he was receiving extra help and support in school to help with exam nerves.
Figure 42 shows that P10 has a lot of support from members of his support network. Most helpers can be relied on for support with ten or more situations, which includes practical and emotional types of events.

P10’s is dependent on his male and female foster carers, who provide a greater range of support. Male foster carer and female foster carer provide help across an equal number of situations.

Friend 2 and friend 3 are the most supportive peers. They differ from other friends in terms of the quantity and quality of support, as they can both be relied on for practical help as well as emotional support.
P10’s foster siblings also provide support across a wide number of situations. The chart suggests that P10 is reliant on foster brother 2 more than foster sister 2.

P10’s social worker is a key source of practical and emotional support.

P10’s uncle is the most significant member of his birth family. Birth mum is more limited in the support she is able to provide, and Aunty and Dad have a limited supportive role.

**Figure 43 Number of helpers used in each situation**

![Bar chart showing number of helpers used in each situation](image)
According to figure 43 P10 has a wide network of helpers who are able to support him with a number of problems and events. He has at least five people that he can count on for support in dealing with problems connected with his family but he has a rich supply of helpers for dealing with feelings of sadness, depression or general upset, and having people who are prepared to ‘stick up’ for him.

Support with emotional needs is in large supply and P10 also has a large group of people he can call on to help complete a complicated task, such as homework, a letter or a form. This pool of support is smaller when considering help needed with travel, money, keeping appointments and sickness.
POSAC Diagram

The completed Dependency Grid was statistically analysed to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers.

Figure 44 P10’s POSAC diagram

The Posac diagram shows that there is no difference between foster carer male and foster carer female in the number and range of situations that they are turned to for support. Their position in the hierarchy illustrates the significance of their role as the main providers of support. Social worker and birth family members are subordinate in the structure as they provide support for some situations that are met by P10’s foster carers.
Friend 2 is an independent chain of support from P10’s foster carers. P10’s friends provide support for a smaller range of situations met by friend 2 and are therefore subordinate to friend 2 in the structure.

Foster sister 1 is another independent source of support from P10’s foster carers and friend 2. The grouping of foster siblings on the right hand side of the diagram under foster sister 1 shows the degree of similarity in supportive function among these individuals. However, foster brother 3 and foster brother 4 show commonality with P10’s group of friends. A problem in the data analysis by POSAC was found in relation to foster brother 2 and foster sister 1. The coordinates positioned foster brother 2 below foster sister 1 in the plot but the accompanying text provided by GRIDSTAT 5 suggested that foster brother 2 was superordinate to foster sister 1, as is evident from figure 42.

Uncle is marginally higher in the chain to mum, and is the most significant birth family member in the structure. Mum and Aunty are subordinate to Uncle, but Mum and Aunty provide support for a different set of situations to each other.

There appears to be several groups in the diagram, which perhaps reflects the way P10 discriminates between members of his support network. At the top of the diagram is his foster carers. To the left is a group consisting of friends; adjacent to this is a group which consists of foster brother 3 and foster brother 4. In the middle, is a group which is comprised of social worker and birth family members, and to the right is a group consisting of foster brothers and foster sister. Dad is a lone figure at the bottom of the diagram.
4.6.10.3 Interview

P10 was asked to explain some of his responses on the Dependency Grid. The interview was tape recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions are used to illustrate particular points.

Foster carers

P10’s foster carers play a significant role in his life. He reported that they listen to him and are good at getting him to talk and share his troubles and worries. He felt at ease with his carers and he felt that he could address any problems he had with them directly.

Dad

The limited support offered by P10’s dad is attributed to his absence from P10’s life:

“Not seen him for ten or eleven years.”

P10 made no further mention of his dad beyond this statement during the interview.

Mum

P10 expressed some uncertainty about his mum’s availability, which would explain the limited range of support. For instance, he was doubtful that his mum would come to see him perform or participate in an activity:

“I don’t really see my mum a lot so she might…not..may not”

P10 said his mum would help him deal with some of the pressure of school work but he admitted that he did not see his mum very often:

“I don’t really see her that often.”
P10 said he would look to his mum for support if he was feeling lonely but he could not rely on her for help with money because:

“she struggles herself”.

Uncle

P10 felt able to confide in his uncle if he was having problems with his carers and he could count on his uncle’s support if he was performing or participating in an activity in front of an audience.

P10 would seek help from his uncle if he needed money, as his uncle was responsible for managing his inheritance.

Friends

P10 had two sets of friends: a group of friends in school and another group who were connected with the army cadets.

Both sets of friends would give him support if he was performing in front of others but he would only talk about troubles and worries with his school friends, as his worries were mainly associated with school:

“when I have worries they sometimes mostly there at school rather than cadets.”

P10 could rely on his friends to accompany him to an activity that he did not want to do alone, especially his friends in the cadets, as they were described as adventurous individuals:

“I know they like..erm..getting involved in things. Activities and things like that.”
Foster brother

P10 saw his foster brother as having a positive impact on his mood:

“My brother could cheer me up [if I was unwell].”

and his foster brother is a good companion if ever he is feeling bored:

“my brother because I play games with him and stuff like that.”

Foster siblings

P10 talked about an emotional connection with foster brother 4 even though he had left the foster placement several months ago to return to his birth family.

“He’s gone back to his dad now. erm…but you know, I miss him. I’ve not seen him for ages.” “We still worry about him…about like…[how he’s doing] and where he is”.

P10 had a sense of being part of a supportive family. He believed that his foster siblings would show their support by attending an activity that he was taking part in, and he could draw on the knowledge and experience of several foster siblings to help with school work and personal issues:

“I could speak to foster brother 3 cause he’s been in these positions”.

Two siblings were ruled out as being helpful with school work because they had learning difficulties.
Self

P10 indicated that he would deal with a number of situations by himself. These were mainly concerned with problems that required a practical solution rather than emotional issues. For instance, P10 said that he would seek help from others to help him manage the pressure of school work but he was inclined to solve the practical problem himself.

Aunty

The limited support offered by aunty was attributed to geographical distance (his aunt lived outside the UK) and her lack of involvement in his life.

Four Field Map

Figure 45 overleaf shows the combined results from the Four Field Map and the Dependency Grid. The table underneath the diagram is used to record the position of those helpers who are not relied on for emotional or practical support or both.
Figure 45: P10's Four Field Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aunty</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Foster brother 4</td>
<td>Foster brother 3</td>
<td>Friend 1</td>
<td>Friend 4</td>
<td>Friend 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Foster carer (f)</td>
<td>Foster carer (m)</td>
<td>Foster sister 2</td>
<td>Mum</td>
<td>Friend 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>Foster carer (f)</td>
<td>Foster sister 1</td>
<td>Foster brother 1</td>
<td>Foster brother 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
P10’s Four Field Map shows a concentration of relationships around sectors 1, 2 and 3. There is no discernable pattern between the position of figures and the amount of support they provide.

P10 has a close relationship with his foster carers, foster siblings and his mum. His relationship with his father is less close, as evidenced by his position in sector 5 (see table). Dad is recorded as providing no practical or emotional support.

There was some differentiation of peers using the Four Field Map. P10 rated his relationship with friend 4, friend 5 and friend 6 as closer than his relationships with friend 1, friend 2 and friend 3. However, this did not translate into differences in the provision of help and support.

P10’s social worker features as a more distant relationship but she provides both practical and emotional support to P10.

Uncle is rated as a close family relative and he provides both practical and emotional support. Aunt is another close relative but offers little in the way of support.

4.6.10.4 Discussion of analysis

The statistical analysis of P10’s grid revealed that P10 had a high dispersion of dependency score, as measured using the Uncertainty Index. Further analysis using the Uncertainty Coefficient found that there was no underlying structure guiding his help-seeking intentions. Certainly, the frequency of calls for help from different helpers shown in his bar chart indicate that there is no strong contrast between helpers.
This pattern is not borne out by the POSAC diagram, which shows differentiated support and the strong presence of P10's foster carers as his main source of support.

The significance of this relationship is also evident in the ratings on the Four Field Map. However, there is no apparent relationship between the 'closeness' of P10’s relationships and the amount of support they provide.

It is clear that P10 feels close to members of his foster family and birth family but support is derived mainly from his foster family. Frequency of contact is a factor that has influenced how P10 has evaluated his dependency relationships, particularly the support from his family.

P10 values his friends and has a small group of very supportive friends in school and a group of friends at cadets who provide a smaller range of help.
4.7 Young People’s Views of the Dependency Grid

The views of the young people on completing the Dependency Grid were audiotaped and transcribed. The following is a summary of the main issues.

Ease of completing the Dependency Grid

All the participants described the Dependency Grid as fairly easy to complete:

“It was alright”

“easy”

“it wasn’t very difficult but some was quite difficult.”

“It was okay to do…. just doing ones. One, one, one”.

The ease of completing the Dependency Grid was an important question to ask as I had concerns that the grid might be cognitively demanding for some participants due to the number of helpers they had to consider.

One participant said that he had difficulty thinking about how he would respond to situations he had never encountered before:

“erm..some of the options for some of the people were like...not been in a situation with some.”

One young person described the qualitative interview as difficult, particularly the process of verbalising the reasons for his choices.

“It’s a bit tricky.....because you’ll have it in your head why you go to some and not others but it’s hard...[to put in your own words]”
Another person said the content was “easy” to understand but she found it hard to make a choice between different helpers.

“It’s hard to pick.[people]. All of them are important but to pick who is important is hard.”

Positive impressions

Several participants were positive about the exercise.

“it does make you think about who you would use.”

One young person described it as “interesting” as it made him realise how much he was valued and understood by other people:

“interesting that half of them know [me]”.

Similarly another participant said:

“Actually, it makes me realise how much my family [mean to me]. And [are worth] making an effort with.”
Improvements

The participants were each asked for ideas on how the Dependency Grid could be improved.

Some felt that it was ‘good enough’:

“nothing”

“no, it’s fine”

“I don’t think you could make it much easier”

Others suggested improvements in the design and presentation of the Dependency Grid.

Appearance

“Split the screen”

“...you can’t see...if you look at the top, you can’t see what’s in line.”
Reduce the length of the Dependency Grid

Reduce the number of situations to:

“fifteen”.

Two other participants agreed with the suggestion that it should be shortened by reducing the number of situations to be considered:

“maybe a bit shorter”

“it could be similar to this [version] but maybe shorter and putting in maybe who would help you with it instead of like..putting the marks.”

However, a third person said:

“When I looked at it I thought, Oh God, it’s gonna take forever. But it was pretty quick.”

Changes to the procedure

Other participants suggested changes to the procedure:

“instead of putting all the people that are important to you, just have the people you use the most.”

Another person said:

“put like, yes and no or something like that [instead of 1 and 0]”
Situations that could be included in future versions

Three participants offered suggestions for situations that could be included in the grid.

“dealing with anger or going through a divorce”.

A second person suggested:

“sexual abuse...you could put that on......kids these days...they all think they can't tell anyone because nobody’s going to believe them.”

A third person suggested positive scenarios:

“[achieved something to be proud of] erm...I’d normally feel proud if I did something.”

“make something better or, erm...say sorry for something.”

Computer interview

The ten participants said they would prefer to complete the Dependency Grid on a computer rather than using paper and pencil. Several young people saw paper and pencil as more effortful and was associated with ‘work’.

“computer is easier”

Paper and pencil would “take ages. Because I've tried doing stuff like this and it's really long”
“you don’t have to write anything.”

“probably easier on a laptop as it maybe seen as more efficient.”

“If that was done on a computer, I’m pretty sure that loads of kids, like on a website, loads of kids would fill it in.”

### 4.7.1 Summary and conclusion

The young people were positive about completing the Dependency Grid on a laptop computer. All the participants preferred this method to using paper and pencil to record their responses. The participants were broadly positive about the Dependency Grid but several participants recommended that the grid should be shortened to reduce the amount of time and effort needed to complete the interview.

A number of suggestions were given for situations that might be included in a future grid that are relevant to young people in care. One suggestion given was in relation to ‘sexual abuse’. This recommendation suggests that young people may not have related the more general items concerning worries, or feeling upset or angry in relation to episodes of abuse and that more specific items may be necessary.
4.8 Social Worker Perspective on the Dependency Grid

Four social workers took part in the evaluation of the Dependency Grid and its findings (see Appendix 4). Feedback from the remaining six social workers proved difficult to obtain for a variety of reasons. One social worker had been signed off work due to ill health, another had recently left her post, and the remaining four social workers did not return the questionnaire, despite promises to do so, and were unavailable when I tried to contact them to complete the questionnaire over the telephone.

Two social workers completed the questionnaire and returned it by e-mail. The other two social workers completed the questionnaire by telephone interview.

Validity

The four social workers who completed the questionnaire were asked to rate the accuracy or validity of the assessment findings for the young person they were responsible for. Three social workers described the results as ‘very accurate’. The fourth social worker rated the results as ‘somewhat accurate’. She said that the assessment had:

‘suumed up the young person quite well’

‘I have known P2 for over four years and the results echo who I felt he was closest to.’

Another said it was:

‘As accurate as it can be’
This social worker was reluctant to describe it as ‘very accurate’ as she suggested that that psychological measurement is not an exact science:

‘any form of measurement is lacking because of the nature of the science’.

Another social worker suggested that the results had confirmed a recent social work assessment:

‘It is useful to know who P10 can talk to (though we covered this in the assessment for Special Guardianship Order).

Usefulness

All four social workers described the assessment results as ‘very helpful’.

One social worker described it as:

‘Very interesting……it’s not the kind of information we tend to get from young people’.

Another saw it as useful for informing social workers about how settled young people are with their carers:

‘it gives insight into a child’s world and how settled they are in placement.’

Some comments referred to its usefulness in providing feedback to social workers on the impact of the service and for making social workers aware of the young person’s needs.
One social worker felt that the information had been particularly useful as the young person was difficult to engage and was reluctant to share his views.

Another social worker saw its potential for promoting change:

‘any gaps [in support] could be further explored and addressed/promoted. As regards to the role of the social worker, if the findings highlighted the young person feels they would not seek out their social worker for support, then this could be useful to try and further engage with the young person to build a positive relationship.’

Dependency Grid Measures

Each social worker was asked to rate the usefulness of each chart or indices. The charts received a ‘very useful’ rating by all four social workers. The Uncertainty Index was rated as ‘very useful’ by three out of four social workers. The fourth rated it as ‘helpful’.

The social workers described the charts as useful visual indicators of how young people utilise their support networks.
Further application

All four social workers agreed that the Dependency Grid interview would be useful/helpful with other young people. A number of responses were given in terms of its possible use and application:

- When a young person first comes into care
- At critical times when a young person is out of control, so that we can gain a sense of what may be troubling them and what they need.
- A helpful tool for a new social worker in order to learn about the young person’s relationships, and who is important to them (x2)
- To inform future interventions
- To inform court reports/statutory reviews (x2)

Application with young people

The social workers could see no circumstance in which the Dependency Grid would be inappropriate for use with young people.

4.8.1 Summary

Four out of ten social workers reviewed the Dependency Grid findings for their own individual cases (P1, P2, P7, and P10) and they all agreed that the findings were consistent with their own assessments.

The Dependency Grid received a favourable review from the social workers, who described it as a useful tool for gaining the young person’s perspective.
4.9 Reference Group’s views of the Dependency Grid

The Dependency Grid was presented to a reference group consisting of sixteen professionals working in the field of social work.

I grouped the transcriptions into themes for ease of analysis.

The function of social support and the significance of close relationships

Two people commented on the poor relationship between social support, as measured by the marks on the grid, and the significance of some close relationships:

“I would take the first person in my family [my dad] but I wouldn’t go to him for anything. That doesn’t mean he’s useless. The fact that he’s around me means he loves me.....my dad’s just there.......and you could look at that in a negative way but I don’t see that [the relationship] as a negative thing.”

A second person mentioned that she had a close relationship with her brother but she argued that the marks on the grid would fail to show the significance of this relationship:

“My brother...he’s got his own life [so he wouldn’t come to see me perform]. It’s not to say he isn’t interested. I think it’s nice that we have [our] separate lives.

This participant saw the importance of the qualitative interview in understanding the meaning of different relationships to the respondent:

“I’m quite happy that it’s not [about] demonstrating an over reliance on having everthing around you all the time.”
Issues of validity and reliability

Some members of the group questioned if young people would ‘make up the scores’ to try to disguise the fact that a relationship was not positive, or seek to portray it as an ideal relationship. The defensive response led to a discussion about the reliability and validity of the Dependency Grid measure. One group of workers said that their service used a set of measures to assess their interventions with LAC. They commented on the difficulty of measuring reliability and validity with LAC due to problems with emotional regulation. These professionals said that they had found that many of the scores obtained from various scales and instruments varied from day to day according to the mood of the young person completing them:

“some days are bad or worse than others.”

Another suggested that some young people might try to complete the grid quickly, without giving appropriate consideration to the items in the grid. This would affect their ability to report on constructs:

“there’s a temptation to output, you know like, that children are aware of what they are showing, do it more quickly. You wouldn’t have the chance to kind of reflect on it as they go through it, which is an important part of getting their constructs, isn’t it.”

One person mentioned the need for member checking to ensure that the assessor’s interpretation of the grid is valid. She was particularly concerned about the ethics of someone drawing conclusions about a young person’s situation without sharing it with them:

“To be fair I would have thought it would be more honest. Because if you do it, you’ve had time to reflect and look at this and think, oh God, this doesn’t look right to me this.”
It was explained that the general impression drawn from the visual inspection of marks on the grid was shared with each young person, which the social worker saw as a positive step in the procedure.

“Yeah, rather than take it away and think, well....”

Appropriateness with Young People in Care

A social worker from the Children’s Disability Team felt that the method was too complex for young people with learning difficulties.

“I would struggle to use this with the young people I work with.”

Several people raised the issue of emotional reactivity to the grid; specifically how people might feel when they can see the patterns in the grid.

Several people said that it looked quite a useful tool for exploring young people’s relationships with foster carers.

One person commented on its value in exploring young people’s expectations about relationships, especially following abuse and neglect:

“If you know that despite being neglected or abused or whatever, that they would expect that person to meet that need....then that in itself would be useful.”

Most people agreed that they could see themselves using it. One worker suggested that it would be a useful addition to the LAC review process.
Administrator skill level and training

The group felt that training was not needed to administer the grid but they did feel that training was needed to learn how to analyse and interpret the data.

Value of the qualitative interview with Young People

Two people questioned whether the list of situations was sufficient to be able to report on the importance of some relationships. This led to a discussion about the use of the qualitative interview for exploring the function and role of certain relationships:

“and I suppose....you might say, well actually I’d go to my dad for this and I wouldn’t go for any others for that. You might find other things out that aren’t listed down that actually you use this relationship for.”

“Yeah. I could think of something that isn’t on there.”

Developments in the design of the Dependency Grid method

One worker suggested that items from the Graded Care plan (Srivastava & Polnay, 1997) could be included in the grid to explore children’s views of parental care.

Another person suggested that it would be interesting to ask young people which situation is most important or relevant to them e.g. transport or money etc.
4.9.1 Summary

The Dependency Grid received a mixed response from the reference group. Many could see the potential for an assessment measure of this kind but several members had reservations about the validity of the results and the impact of such an assessment on young people in care. Two members of the reference group had doubts that the Dependency Grid would capture the significance of close relationships.
4.10 Summative Analysis

4.10.1 Overview

This section will present an analysis of the main themes from across the ten cases to assess the usefulness of the Dependency Grid.

4.10.2 Dependency relationships

Table 10 shows the most dependent relationship (shaded box) for each participant and which helpers provide ‘specialist’ support (marked by an ‘X’).

Table 10 Dependent relationships and ‘specialist’ help and support

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<th>P1</th>
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<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
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<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
<th>P10</th>
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<tr>
<td>Female Carer</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Male carer</td>
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<td>Residential</td>
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<td>Aunty</td>
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<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a and b is used in the table to show joint provision of support, as identified from the POSAC analysis.
Foster Carers and Residential Carers

Table 10 shows that foster carers and residential care staff were significant in the lives of all but two participants. Carers were less significant for P5, who drew mostly on the support of her boyfriend, and also P9 who drew mainly on the support of his mum and nana. P7’s carers had a distinct supportive role but he relied on his carers for very little. This finding makes sense as P7 had only very recently moved to a new care placement, and so his relationship with his carers was in its infancy.

The young people in foster carer were more dependent on their female foster carers than their male foster carers. Male foster carer was a ‘specialist’ helper for only two out of a possible seven cases (P3 and P4), and for four participants, was ranked 5 or below as a source of support. In the case of P10, male carer was jointly identified with female carer as providing ‘specialist’ support and suggests that he construed them as having a similar supportive role. It is significant that P1 and P2 both sought less help from their male carer than their female carer, and that the male carer was construed as a weak source of support in comparison with other members of their support network. P1 and P2 were placed with the same foster carers and this shared view adds weight to the validity of the Dependency Grid findings. Furthermore, the nature of P1’s relationship with her male carer relative to her other relationships was consistent with an assessment found two years earlier when P1 took part in a pilot study using the dependency grid technique (Powell, 2010).

Friends and Siblings

The POSAC analysis found that friends provided ‘specialist’ support to six participants. Of these, two participants (P2 and P3) showed greater dependency on their friend or friends than any other relationship.
Siblings or foster siblings were a poor source of support overall. Only two participants were reliant on their sibling or foster sibling for ‘specialist’ support and in both cases there were very few situations in which help would be enlisted from their sibling or foster sibling.

**Birth Parents and Extended Family Members**

Table 10 shows that grandparents, aunty and mum offered distinct support from other helpers, and birth mum was the main source of support for two male participants (P7 and P9). Significantly, both boys were in regular contact with their birth families. Of course, birth parents were not always seen as helpful and for some participants birth parents did not feature at all (e.g. P1, P6 and P8), especially birth father. The absence of birth parents from the young people’s networks was explained in the biographical information for each case and was often related to the causes which had led to the young person becoming looked after.

Teacher and social worker provided distinct support for three participants but there were very few situations where help would be sought from social worker or teacher. Two participants (P3 and P5) were critical of their social workers and their attitude was related to difficulties in their relationship.

**4.10.3 Self**

Self was one of the lowest scoring options for all but three participants (P7, P2 and P9). For P7, P2 and P9, Self was ranked second, third and fourth in their list of helpers, which indicates that they would deal with many situations by themselves. Self was identified by POSAC as an independent factor for only one participant (P7). Therefore, for the majority of participants the decision to manage a situation independently was a matter
of choice rather than necessity, as there was no situation in which the participants would rely solely on their own resources.

Dependency and Age

There was no evidence of any patterns in the dependency profiles of the participants in relation to age. Older people did not show greater self-reliance or independence than younger participants, nor did they show an increased reliance on friends more than carers.

4.10.3.1 Supportive functions

Figure 46 shows the mean ranked scores for all twenty five situations listed in the Dependency Grid

![Chart showing mean ranked scores for supportive functions](image)
Figure 46 shows the mean ranking of situations for the sample. The chart indicates that the participants had maximum support from their network of helpers if they had a spell in hospital. However, they would be selective in seeking help from their network in dealing with other situations, such as problems connected with their birth family or carers, advice on fashion/personal appearance, help in controlling and managing anger, and needing someone to share a secret. Interestingly, the participants could count on more helpers in dealing with feelings of low mood (i.e. sadness and upset) than anger.

In terms of practical help, the participants indicated that they had a number of people they would use in relation to school work and help completing a challenging task (difficulty understanding) but they would utilise the support of just a few individuals in meeting needs relating to individual care e.g. sickness and keeping and attending appointments. Most of the participants said they would rely on their carers for these situations, and this was the case even among participants whose friends and family were considered to be their most supportive relationships.

Friends were perceived as significant to many of the participants. Close friendships were an important source of emotional support and to a lesser extent, practical support.

**Qualitative data**

Most participants found the qualitative interview difficult. Several participants mentioned that they found it difficult to explain why they would choose the support of some helpers over others. This may be due to the verbal ability of the young people, as it requires a level of verbal skill to communicate this information. Consequently, many participants offered practical justifications for why they would seek support from some helpers and not others e.g. ‘they’re always at home [when I am unwell]’. Similarly,
the lack of contact or availability of the helper was frequently referred to in
the participant’s explanations as to why certain helpers were not selected.
P5 discriminated between some of her helpers in terms of age, as children
were construed as less helpful than adults and young people.

Emotional closeness was the construct used by P2 and P6 to describe why
some helpers were turned to for support and not others. Similarly, the
dependability of helpers defined why some people were relied on for
support and not others. For example, P9 referred to his mum and nana as
‘always there for me’ and both P2 and P4 spoke of their carer’s willingness
to ‘stick’ by them in difficult times.

Trust was another factor influencing young people’s use of support. P1, P6
and P7 spoke of being selective in who they would talk to about personal
matters. P6 and P3 felt unable to share some information with adults,
including their foster carers.

Intelligence was a common description of helpers who were chosen for their
ability to support the young people with homework and complex tasks.

Humour and a sense of fun were characteristics that some participants
referred to in their choice of helpers in dealing with problem situations. This
was a trait that was especially valued in friends.
5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview

This chapter begins by reviewing and interpreting the findings before considering the methodological limitations of the study and the implications for practice and future research.

5.2 Summary of the main research findings

The aim of this exploratory study was to explore the use of an adapted version of George Kelly’s (1955) Dependency Grid to investigate social support in young people in care. The study’s findings suggest that the Dependency Grid is an acceptable assessment tool, which can reveal useful information about the availability and use of social support with young people in care. However, a number of methodological and conceptual issues were identified which limit its usefulness as a clinical tool.

5.3 Utility of the Dependency Grid

The usefulness of the Dependency Grid was judged on its ability to describe the support network and the significance of individual helpers using a series of cases. These were compared to explore commonalities and differences in the allocation of dependencies.

5.3.1 Structure of the support network

Four groups were identified according to how the participants allocated their dependencies. The largest group (n= 5) consisted of participants who made more frequent calls on their carers than other relationships. The second group (n= 2) was composed of participants who made more calls for support
on their parent or grandparent than any other helper. A third group (n=2) showed greater dependency on their friend(s) for support, whilst one participant relied mainly on the support of her boyfriend.

Further insight into the patterns of help-seeking on particular helpers was gained by using POSAC, a type of ordinal factor analysis (Bell, et al., 2010). This helped to distinguish between helpers with a ‘specialist’ role from those whose supporting role overlapped with others. Most participants had at least three ‘specialist’ helpers. Carers were identified as ‘specialist’ helpers in 8 cases, and friend(s) was a ‘specialist’ helper for six out of ten participants. These ‘specialist’ helpers provided support which could not be obtained from other helpers, and were therefore a significant source of support to the participants. Indeed, it would be expected that the unavailability or loss of a ‘specialist’ helper would have greater impact on the person than a generalist helper, unless the person had sourced an alternative for the lost relationship.

As ‘specialist’ helpers, friends and carers were identified as a significant source of support for the participants. This finding is consistent with existing research on the support networks of LAC (e.g. Lewis, 1999; McMahon & Curtin, 2012; Perry, 2006; Poulin, 1985) and provides evidence on the validity of the Dependency Grid as a measure of social support.

The young people in foster care were more dependent on their foster family than their birth families, but the two participants who were in residential care were more dependent on their birth parents than those in foster care. The same pattern was found in a study by Bailey (2009), whilst Perry (2006) found that LAC in residential care had poorer relationships with their parents than those in foster care. As Perry’s (2006) research was based on a U.S population, it is possible that the conflicting findings are due to differences in the nature of the care populations. For instance, the young people in residential care in the current study and Bailey’s (2009) study were accommodated on a voluntary basis (Section 20) and this can mean that
they have fewer restrictions on family contact than children on Full Care Orders.

One of the strengths of the Dependency Grid is its ability to investigate at a finer level of detail the support derived from individual helpers. This analysis highlighted differences in the person’s dependency on specific helpers, including those with the same role relationship. For instance, participants were more dependent on their female foster carers than their male foster carers, and in two cases, male carer offered limited support. Only one participant indicated that their male carer was a good source of support and in this case male carer covered exactly the same situations as the female carer. It is not clear whether the differentiation of male and female carer is due to differences in personality or differences in the roles and responsibilities of the male and female carers. It could also be a general preference for maternal support, as studies have found that there is greater decline in paternal support than maternal support during adolescence (Calarossi & Eccles, 2003; Levitt, et al., 2007), and includes LAC (Bravo and deValle, 2003).

Dependency on birth family members was low for eight out of ten participants and included parents (P1, P6, P8, and P10), siblings, and extended family members (e.g. aunts, uncles, grandparents, nieces and nephews). Again this was not dissimilar to other research (e.g. Schlosser, 1996). Birth father was not included in the support networks of several participants and with the exception of P2, was a low source of support. This result is not surprising as fathers had been the main perpetrators of abuse and/ or were absent from the lives of the young people.

Peer support was valued by the young people in care and friends were identified as ‘specialist’ helpers for just over half the cases. Two participants leaned on their friends for support more than any other relationship, including foster carers. This finding adds to the existing literature on the significance of friendships during adolescence and the
importance of peer relationships for LAC in terms of resilience and wellbeing (Dolan & McGrath, 2006; Ghate & Hazel, 2002; Gilligan, 2005; McMahon & Curtin, 2012; Schofield & Beek, 2009). Romantic relationships featured in the Dependency Grid of only one participant (P5), and this was her most supportive relationship. Romantic relationships were also found to be significant in a study by Schlosser (1996), although Schlosser (1996) found that trust and emotional intimacy was an issue in these relationships. Although it is just a single case this was not evident with P5, who described herself as emotionally ‘attached’ to her partner. Also, P5’s boyfriend and her mum were the only people she felt she could trust with a secret.

Foster siblings had a limited supportive role in the lives of many participants but this is not to say that these relationships were not significant. For instance, P1 wanted to have a better relationship with her foster sister, and P10 expressed sadness at the loss of a relationship with a young person who had since returned to his own birth family. P3 on the other hand, expressed ambivalence towards her two foster brothers who she felt were generally disinterested in her. This range of attitude and feelings towards foster siblings has been found in other research and is not uncharacteristic of ordinary sibling relationships. Birth siblings, like foster siblings, were turned to for a limited range of situations and they often served the same subset of situations as friends. As all the participants were living separately from their birth siblings it is impossible to tell whether the low levels of dependency on birth siblings was due to the effects of separation or a normal feature of most sibling relationships.

Teachers and social workers were turned to for a limited range of support but they had a ‘specialist’ role among three participants. There was a mixed response towards social workers from the ten participants. Some (P2, P7 and P9) valued their social workers, especially those that had had a consistent relationship with their social workers; while others expressed dislike or were critical of their social workers (e.g. P5). The use of teachers
and support assistants by participants shows the importance of school and education in the lives of some young people in care.

Self-reliance is a dimension that is rarely considered by social support measures but can be easily explored using the Dependency Grid. Self is an important factor when considering social support as it can highlight an individual’s capabilities as well as providing psychological insight into an individual’s relationship with others. For instance, it might say something about a person’s ability to trust and depend on others if they are overly self-reliant. Conversely, someone who relies extensively on others may indicate a degree of immaturity or indeed anxiety about their ability to manage situations confidently by themselves. These two patterns of relating were described by Chiari et al. (1994) and share some similarities with the two insecure attachment styles identified by Ainsworth et al., (1978). Given that attachment theory is the main developmental theory that is used to understand young people in care (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999), the measurement of self-reliance was of particular interest in this study.

Self was one of the lowest scoring options for all but three participants. Self was ranked second for one participant and third and fourth for two others. Of these, two participants showed greater dependence on members of their birth family than carers, and it is possible that the high dependence on self reflects their need to be independent, as they struggle with the position of being unable to rely on their birth family for support and are resistant or unable to accept the support offered by their carers. Certainly in P7’s case, the low frequency of calls for support on his carers was probably due to the fact that his relationship with his carers was new and therefore he could not be sure if his carers would be able to meet his needs. On the other hand, P9 seemed unwilling to accept a relationship with his carers with whom he had been living for six months. It is possible that P9’s preference for self and other relationships instead of his carers was due to his particular circumstance, as there was some uncertainty about his current placement and his future care.
Scores for ‘self’ do need to be treated with caution as it is possible that participants ignored or forgot about this option when completing the grid. This has also been found in other studies (e.g. Walker, et al., 1988) and it explains why ‘self’ has shown poor consistency in studies of test-retest reliability. Walker (1997) advised on the need to interview and question participants when using self as a resource as the presence or absence of ticks for self may have different meanings. For instance, some people may tick ‘self’ to indicate that they took the initiative to seek help from others.

5.3.2 Functional Support

One advantage of the Dependency Grid is that it can be used to assess functional support by examining the correspondence between helpers and situations to determine what each relationship provides for the person and the appropriateness of the helper for the problem or situation. To assist with this assessment, a standard grid was developed which consisted of twenty-five situations that were categorised according to the conceptual distinction of emotional support and practical support (tangible help and information). Differences were found in the distribution of dependency according to the type of support that was needed for each situation. On the whole, participants looked to their carers as the main providers of practical support and this was the case even for participants who saw their friends or family as their main source of support. Consequently, practical support needs were met by fewer helpers, whereas help for emotional needs was more widely available. This pattern may not be unique to the child-carer relationship, as del Valle, Bravo and Lopez (2010) found that the provision of emotional and practical support from parents decreased during adolescence and coincided with an increase in the provision of emotional support from peers. However, the study found that parents continued to be the main providers of practical support to the adolescents.
The literature review referred to a number of instruments that employed a single item (vignette or question) to measure the types of support provided by individual helpers (e.g. Bailey, 2009; Tracy & Whittaker, 1990). This study found considerable variability in the individual’s use of helpers across a common set of situations that tapped either emotional or practical support. It therefore raises questions about the appropriateness of assessing support using a single item. There was also variability across the cases in the levels of support for each of the situations. In general, the participants had the most number of helpers if they found themselves in hospital. However, they relied on fewer helpers in dealing with other situations, such as problems connected with their birth family or carers, advice on fashion/personal appearance, help in controlling and managing anger, and having someone to share a secret. Interestingly, the participants could count on more helpers in dealing with feelings of low mood (i.e. sadness and upset) than anger. This may not be surprising as sadness often draws sympathy whereas anger can invoke hostility and criticism from others and is usually seen as an emotion that people must manage by themselves (e.g. P2).

5.3.3 Dependency and Close relationships

Attachment and social support are often seen as interlinked, as for most people, support is usually received from within a network of close family relationships. This is not the case for children and young people in care who are separated from birth family members and placed with substitute carers. For these children the relationship between social support and close relationships may be weaker than the general population and measures of social support may not capture the complexity of their relationships. This proved to be the case with the Dependency Grid. A weak, negative correlation was found ($r = -0.243$) between the Dependency Grid and the Four Field Map, which suggests that the emotional strength or felt closeness of relationships did not influence the help-seeking decisions of the participants.
This result was predicted by members of the reference group who evaluated the Dependency Grid. Two members suggested that the Dependency Grid, with its emphasis on help-seeking, would not capture the emotional significance of some relationships, including relationships where the network member is more dependent than the respondent, as was the case for several participants e.g. P5 and P7. This finding supports the conceptual distinction between close relationships or attachment and social support. Where attachment is described as an enduring bond that can last a life time, social support is concerned with relationships that serve a particular function at a particular time and within a particular context. The weak relationship between social support and closeness for the sample indicates that for many LAC, social support is derived from within a network of pragmatic relationships. Schlosser (1996) reached the same conclusion in her investigation of LAC and a comparison group. It hints at the relative fragility of the support network for LAC relative to the general population and explains why significant supportive relationships are lost when young people exit from care.

5.34 Personal Construct Theory, Social Support and Dependency

Another way in which the data in the Dependency Grid can be summarised is by calculating the size of the network and the total dependency score (total number of ticks in the grid or proportion of the grid that was ticked) (Mitchell & Latchford, 2010; Smith, et al., 1991; Walker, 1997). This was used in the current study to index the amount of support available to each participant. A low correlation was found between the total dependency score and the number of helpers ($r = 0.198$), which supports existing evidence regarding the poor relationship between network size and levels of social support (Barrera, 1986; Sarason, et al., 1990).
Kelly (1955) was also of the view that it is not the amount of support or the size of the network that is important but how the person goes about getting their needs met, or in Kelly’s terms, how the person disperses their dependencies. This is a rather unique way of assessing social support from the traditional approach of summing the support for the individual helpers or calculating a total score. The series of cases presented in this study showed varying degrees of dispersion according to the completed Dependency Grids. The concentrated pattern of dependency that Kelly (1955) saw as typical in childhood was clearly evident in the Dependency Grid of one participant (P1). P1 had a small personal network and she drew mostly on the support of her foster carer and friend. It may be significant that P1 was described in her case file as ‘socially and emotionally immature’, which is a trait that P1 acknowledged in herself and was a role she adopted in relationships with her friends. A second participant, P8, may also have had a constricted pattern of dependency. P8 only wished to consider her foster carer and friend and she dismissed other relationships as unimportant.

It was surprising that more grids were not found with low levels of dispersion as Kelly saw the dispersion of dependency as a mature pattern of relating to others. There is some support for Kelly’s theory in the reported indices of dispersion from a study of school aged children and a study which included childhood grids completed by adults (Bell, et al., 2010; Gannon, 1994).

Another reason for expecting low dispersion of dependency for LAC is that research suggests that this pattern is more common in populations that have experienced abuse and hostile or dismissive caregiving (Bell, et al., 2010; Chiari, et al., 1994). Of course, this evidence is based on research with adult clinical populations rather than children, and the difference in dispersion may be due to the fact that adults have greater influence in creating and shaping their support networks than children and young people. Furthermore, it is also possible that the experience of being in care leads to greater dispersion of dependency, as LAC are unable to rely on
their birth family for support and must seek support from a wider range of relationships, including professionals. Several studies confirm that LAC have larger support networks than care leavers and children in the general population, and that they are more likely to use professional and non-affiliative helpers (Bravo & Del Valle, 2003; McMahon & Curtin, 2012; Schlosser, 1996). Studies have also found that the transition from care into independence results in the loss of these relationships, which some people are unable to replace (Stein, 2006). This vulnerable group is more likely to show the low dispersed dependencies similar to those reported in Winter, Bhandari and Bell’s (2010) study. If, as it is suggested, that foster care or residential care leads to greater dispersion of dependency, then it may be unhelpful to interpret the indices of dispersion of this population using theory that describes the development of dependency relationships of people who are raised within their family of origin.

In many respects, a dispersed pattern of dependency in LAC can be seen to be a more resilient pattern of relating, as relationships can often be short-lived owing to the number of placements experienced by most children in the care system (Sinclair, 2008; Skuse & Ward, 2003; Ward & Skuse, 2001). Even in this study, eight participants had had two or more placements since they had come into care. By dispersing dependencies, the loss of a supportive relationship may be softened compared with those who adopt the riskier strategy of concentrating their dependencies on a small number of people. Kelly (1955) and his followers have suggested that these different patterns of dependency arise out of differences in the nature of the constructs used. For instance, Walker et al., (1988) found supportive evidence of more permeable and preemptive construing in people with dispersed dependencies than those with undispersed dependencies. Due to the difficulties in operationalising the concepts, the nature of the constructs used by participants was not considered in this study.

P3 and P10 were at the other end of the continuum, with relatively dense, highly dispersed dependency grids. At first glance, the grids would appear
to be examples of what Kelly saw as a more useful way of taking care of their needs but the Uncertainty Index and the Uncertainty Coefficient found little evidence of any structure to their help-seeking, which can indicate indiscriminate help-seeking. Walker (1997) referred to this pattern as a dilated undispersed dependency. Certainly there was a sense from P3 that whilst she discriminated between adults and young people in choosing who she would seek help from, she was quite dependent on the support of her peers. Indeed, P3 frequently sought help from peers for situations which for most other participants were met by adult carers e.g. practical support. Similarly for P10, there was a lot of overlap in the provision of support between different helpers, but more interestingly, unlike many other participants, P10 did not differentiate between his male and female carers in seeking help for different events.

5.35 Methods of Analysis

It was noted in the literature review that there is no single method for analysing Dependency Grids and therefore one of the aims of this study was to explore the usefulness of different methods of analysis.

5.35.1 Quantitative interview data

Several statistical methods were used to analyse the quantitative data contained in the individual Dependency Grids. These methods provided different levels of detail on the dependency relationships.

5.35.1.2 The Dispersion of Dependency

Three statistical measures were used to index the level of dispersion in each grid: the Dispersion of Dependency Index (Walker, Ramsay and Bell, 1988), The Uncertainty Index (Bell, 2001), and the Breadth of POSAC (Bell, Bhandari and Winter, 2010). It could be seen from inspecting the grids that there was considerable variation in the dispersion of dependency.
However, the three measures were poor at differentiating between the grids and they did not agree on the relative levels of dispersion across the ten cases. The Uncertainty Index (Bell, 2001) was the summary measure that corresponded best with the observations made of the actual grids but it was poor at detecting apparent differences between the grids with medium levels of dispersion.

The Breadth of POSAC was found to be a rather crude measure of dispersion compared with the DDI and the Uncertainty Index, as the variation in results was closely related to the variation in the number of helpers available in each grid. Furthermore, the Breadth of POSAC measure did not correspond well with observable increases in dispersion across the grids.

Problems with the DDI have already been discussed in the literature review and methodology chapter. The DDI has been found to vary according to the sample size and, as it is not a standard statistic, the meaning of the score relative to other scores is not known (Bell, 2001). The Uncertainty Index does not suffer from these problems but the index can be difficult to interpret as there are no norms for the measure and there are few grids available that can serve as a reference point, as few studies have used the index since it was introduced in a paper by Richard Bell in 2001.

5.35.1.3 Uncertainty Coefficient

The Uncertainty Coefficient (Bell, 2001) was used to investigate the high Uncertainty Index scores among participants in the sample. Unlike the Uncertainty Index, the Uncertainty Coefficient is able to detect an undifferentiated pattern in highly dispersed dependency grids. The Uncertainty Coefficient did appear to relate to the observable patterns across the individual grids, such that those who showed a strong preference for support from one or two network members relative to the other helpers
had high Uncertainty Coefficient scores, and those with grids where the differences between helpers was less, had relatively low Uncertainty Coefficient scores. Two participants (P3 and P10) fitted this description on the basis of the Uncertainty Coefficient and the details of these cases were discussed.

5.35.1.4 Descriptive Statistical Measures

A more meaningful and detailed analysis of the individual Dependency Grids was achieved by using bar charts to show which helpers the participants relied on for support. This graphical representation of the data was similar to Talbot, Cooper and Ellis (1991), and was adapted to show the type of support that was sought from each helper (i.e. emotional or practical) and the number of helpers used to manage each situation. The bar charts illustrated differences in the frequency of calls made on each helper.

5.35.1.5 Partial Order Scalogram by Coordinates (POSAC)

Partial Order Scalogram with base Coordinates (POSAC) has been described as a type of ordinal factor analysis (Raveh & Landau, 1993), and was used in the analysis of dependency grids in a paper by Bell, Winter and Bhandari (2010). In this study, POSAC was useful in showing qualitative as well as quantitative differences in the participant’s dependency relationships. POSAC provided important information about the role of each helper, and more specifically, whether the helper had a ‘specialist’ supportive role or was used for a common set of situations.

POSAC was used to model the Dependency Grid data to reveal hierarchical patterns in the relationships, which is consistent with Kelly’s organisational corrollary (Bell, Winter and Bhandari, 2010). The spatial representation of the grid data provided useful insight into the way in which the participant’s construed their dependency relationships. For instance, helpers with similar
profiles were located close to each other, while those who were positioned far apart were construed differently. Some helpers had the same profile and occupied the same position in the spatial configuration, which suggests that the participants were unable to discriminate between these helpers using their dependency constructs. In some cases (n=3), this meant that the male and female foster carers were construed in a similar way and that the participant considered either carer as able to meet their needs. In other cases (e.g. P1 and P2) male carer had a subordinate position within the dependency structure, which would imply that he was construed as less helpful than the female carer.

There was a problem in the analysis of some dependency grids using POSAC which will be referred to here. In two cases (P8 and P10), the coordinate positions of helpers did not correspond with the text that described the hierarchical arrangement of helpers (see Appendix 15). For instance, in P10’s configuration (figure 44) foster brother 2 was positioned below foster sister 1 but was described in the accompanying text from GRIDS TAT5 as superordinate to foster sister 1. These problems were shared in an e-mail with Dr. Richard Bell who developed GRIDSTAT5. Dr Bell suggested that the issue was likely to be a problem in the POSAC code, as POSAC was a large program that he had obtained from Israel and incorporated into GRIDSTAT5. It is essential that practitioners and researchers examine the results from POSAC and are aware of possible inconsistencies in the analyses when interpreting the grid data.

Finally, it is worth noting that although POSAC has been found to be helpful in showing the usefulness of members of the support network, it does not show a person’s preference for support from their providers. For instance, it cannot be said that the participant would chose support from their superordinate helpers over the support of a subordinate helper. For this a rating scale would be needed, but as discussed in the methodology section, this procedure was explored in a pilot study and was found to be too complex for some young people.
5.35.2 Qualitative interview data

Qualitative information which related to the way in which the participants construed their dependency relationships was elicited using a technique advocated by Beail and Baeil (1985) which invites the respondent to verbalise the discriminations made between different helpers. This qualitative data is considered a strength of the present study, as it brought meaning to the patterns in the Dependency Grid data.

Some similarities were found among the participants in their construal of helpers. Humour, trust, emotional closeness, intelligence, and availability were the emergent poles of constructs used by the participants to differentiate between their set of potential helpers. With more time, a fuller and richer understanding of the participants’ meanings might have been achieved by seeking the polar opposites to these and other discriminations. To achieve this would have required more than one interview, and in view of the difficulties encountered in the recruitment of LAC for this and a previous study (Powell, 2010), it was discounted out of concern that a commitment to more than one interview would discourage young people from taking part.

The qualitative interview worked best with some participants more than others and was undoubtedly the most difficult part of the methodology. Many struggled to verbalise the links between helpers and situations, which the theory suggests is to be expected, as dependency constructs are said to exist at a preverbal, unconscious level and often remain unverbalized (Kelly, 1955; Walker, 1993). Children and young people are more likely to find this task difficult due to their immature vocabulary skills, and it may be more of a challenge for young people in care as there is a disproportionate number of children with language and learning difficulties in the LAC population (Jackson & McParlin, 2006; Meltzer, et al., 2003; Stringer & Lozano, 2007). Of course, the advantage of using the Dependency Grid in these circumstances is that greater emphasis can be placed on the quantitative
data, as this is not dependent on the expressive verbal skills of the interviewees.

Although it proved difficult to capture the constructs employed by the young people, the qualitative interview provided a useful check on the accuracy of the quantitative data, as participants made changes to their responses when they were asked about the marks in the grid.

5.36 Reflections on the Administration and Analysis of the Dependency Grid

5.36.1 Strengths

Most social support measures for children and young people tend to focus on birth parents and friends. Such measures are clearly inappropriate for use with young people in care as they do not recognise the complex nature of their support networks and therefore cannot be used to investigate the multi-relationships in the lives of LAC (e.g. social workers, teachers, carers, friends, birth parents, siblings and extended family members). The Dependency Grid does not suffer from this problem as it is a flexible tool for assessing the unique set of helpers in a person’s life and is only limited by the person’s ability to hold in mind their support network in order to make their discriminations. Unlike existing measures of social support, the Dependency Grid was able to investigate self-reliance, which which has been linked to particular styles of attachment (Chiari, et al., 1994).

One of the main concerns about using the Dependency Grid with young people in care was emotional reactivity or distress caused by the nature of the questions and procedures involved. There was a risk that participants might be affected by the process, which touches on the psychodynamics of their relationship with others. De Lange, Agneessens, and Waege (2004) suggest that questions about an individual’s support network differ from ordinary survey questions because they invade privacy and can be
perceived as “sensitive” (Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski, 2000) or “threatening” (Sudman & Bradburn, 1982). In practice, the young people who took part in this study seemed unaffected by their participation and indeed two people indicated that it had been a positive exercise that had increased their awareness and appreciation of the people around them. This is a common finding in the application of PCP methods (Burr, et al., 2012).

The Dependency Grid was presented to the participants in an electronic form on a laptop computer. The participants judged this as ‘easier’ and less onerous to complete than if it had been presented in the traditional way as a paper and pencil exercise. This positive attitude is probably related to the participants’ age, as electronic and digital media is a familiar and accepted method of communication used by young people.

The main reason for developing an electronic version of the Dependency Grid was to make it easier to input and prepare the data for computer analysis by GRIDSTAT5. In a previous study (Powell, 2010), the data from the completed paper copies of the Dependency Grid had to be entered manually row by row, which was extremely tedious, time consuming and increased the risk of data input errors.

It is possible that the completion of the Dependency Grid on a laptop computer may have facilitated the interviews with young people, as the reduction in eye contact through shared attention on the computer screen may have helped the young people to feel more comfortable in the interview and may have aided the disclosure of information. This was not assessed as part of the research and the evidence on this is mixed. For instance, Black and Ponirakis (2000) found that computer facilitated interviews were useful for investigating sensitive information, such as drug and alcohol use or sexual experience, but some studies have found it to be less helpful when investigating emotional issues, such as psychological distress (Newman, Des Jarlais, Turner, Gribble, Cooley, & Paone, 2002). In a
review of the literature, Hill (2006) found that children disclosed the same amount or more when they participated in a computer assisted interview compared with paper and pencil questionnaires and traditional interviews. It is impossible to tell whether the completion of the Dependency Grid on a laptop computer led to increased disclosure but the evidence gathered as part of this study suggests that it may, at the very least, increase the participant’s engagement in the interview, especially if they perceive it as ‘easy’ and are comfortable in using a computer.

Some young people were willing to discuss negativity in their relationships with others and it is possible that this was facilitated by the Dependency Grid interview itself rather than the use of a laptop computer. Instead of focusing on often difficult and emotive relationships concerning birth parents and carers, the Dependency Grid seeks to understand how people construe a number of different relationships. The format of the interview with its use of open ended questions may have helped the young people to feel in control of what and how much they were willing to disclose, which can be less threatening than asking direct questions about people’s individual relationships. The structure imposed on the interview from grid interviews is also seen as helpful over conventional interview methods as it can be facilitative, helping participants to report on their experiences and meanings, which they may not be immediately aware of (Burr, King, and Butt, 2012).

5.36.2 Limitations

The Dependency Grid is relatively labour intensive in terms of the time and effort needed to deliver the interview and analyse and score the individual grids. Consequently it is unlikely to be used as a routine assessment but it may be useful in specific circumstances where more detailed analysis of a young person’s relationships is needed.
Each grid took approximately 20-30 minutes to input and prepare the data for analysis. The dependency grids were completed in MS Word documents and the data from the completed grids was copied and pasted into text files for GRIDSTAT5. Once the data had been pasted into a text file, it then had to be prepared for analysis by creating single spaces between the binary digits using the space bar on the keyboard. This was necessary for the data to be ‘read’ by the computer program. GRIDSTAT5 presents the data analysis in a text file. The rather crude data displays had to be reproduced using other software to produce charts of an acceptable quality for the thesis. As alluded to here, GRIDSTAT5 is not a particularly ‘user friendly’ program and it is likely that a researcher or practitioner would need time to read the manual and familiarise themselves with the program.

Another limitation centres on the use of a predefined list of situations to assess people’s dependency relationships. One participant said that he found it difficult to assign helpers to situations he had not personally experienced and this may have been an issue for other participants. The participants may have also interpreted the situations differently, such that one situation is interpreted as needing practical support by one participant and another participant may have responded as if it required emotional support. One way of improving the procedure and increasing validity might be to ask the participants if they are able to relate a given situation to actual experiences. The participants could also be asked to define the type of support they received i.e. practical or emotional support, as was used in a dependency grid study by Whittingham (1990).

A further problem with the Dependency grid came to light in the study of P8. P8 was only willing to consider her foster carer, friend and social worker as helpers, and although her network was not as limited as this, she was reluctant to include these other potential helpers. Clearly the validity of the Dependency Grid and the usefulness of the statistical methods of analysis depend on establishing a satisfactory list of potential helpers at the start of the procedure. Whilst this study used an open list of individual helpers, it is
possible that the original procedure, with its predefined list of role relationships might be a better option for some respondents.

### 5.37 Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of the dependency grid technique is not well established, at least in psychometric terms, as there is no standard grid. Some have questioned the appropriateness of evaluating grids using methods and approaches that do not fit within the constructivist paradigm (Bell, 1988; Viney & Nagy, 2012; Winter, 2003). Kelly himself, argued against the positivist view of validity and instead suggested that validity should be judged on the usefulness of the theory or technique and its capacity to increase understanding (Fransella & Bannister, 1977; Fransella, et al., 2004). Using this criteria, I would suggest that the Dependency Grid employed in this study did increase knowledge of how individuals relate to and make sense of members of their support network.

Various steps were taken to increase the validity or credibility of the research technique and its findings. Firstly, the face validity of the Dependency Grid was increased by constructing a list of situations from existing social support measures and research on stress factors in young people. This was then offered for scrutiny by a group of psychologists and a group of field work practitioners from Social Care, who gave broad approval to the content and design of the Dependency Grid and its procedures.

The qualitative interview was useful in ensuring consistency between the participants views and the marks made on the grid. Several participants corrected their responses to the grid during the course of the interview, ensuring that there was agreement between the quantitative and qualitative data.
A further check on the validity of the individual case results was sought by means of respondent validation, which is a technique recommended by researchers within PCP (Kelly, 1955; Viney & Nagy, 2012; Viney, 1987). This has been described as the single most important strategy for checking the credibility of qualitative research findings (Guba, 1981). All ten participants agreed with my initial impressions of their Dependency Grids, which drew attention to the helpers that provided the most and least support. The full analysis was not offered for member checking due to practical difficulties in achieving follow-up interviews with participants and also ethical concerns about how this sensitive information might be shared with the young people. Instead, the completed analysis of each grid was shared with individual social workers to canvass their views and opinions on the validity of the findings. Unfortunately only four social workers responded but there was strong agreement between the individual Dependency Grid results and the perceptions of the young people by their social workers.

At least some support for the credibility of the Dependency Grid technique is derived from the results of P9, who completed both the Dependency Grid and the Bene Anthony Test of Family Relations (Bene, 1985). There was broad agreement between the two measures regarding the significance of P9’s relationship with members of his support network, which strengthens the current findings.

The current study did not set out to investigate the reliability of the Dependency Grid, however, in the case of P1 there was considerable agreement between her Dependency Grid results and a Dependency Grid she completed two years earlier for a pilot study (Powell, 2010).
5.4 Methodological Considerations

There are a number of limitations to the current study which will be discussed in this section.

5.4.1 Generalisability

The study’s findings are based on a small sample of ten LAC, which limits the generalisability of the findings, at least from a quantitative research perspective. The participants were recruited from a local authority in the North West of England and were White British. The study is therefore unable to comment on how young people from different regions and ethnic backgrounds would respond to the Dependency Grid interview. This is a serious limitation of the study as black and ethnic minorities are over represented in the care system in England (Owen & Statham, 2009).

All participants were willing volunteers and therefore it is not known how the wider population of young people in care might respond to the Dependency Grid interview. This includes the most vulnerable members of the looked-after population, who are often difficult to engage.

5.4.2 Demographics

Although the generalisability of the findings are limited by the small sample, it is considered an appropriate size for investigating the research aims concerning the usefulness of the Dependency Grid, as it allows for the results to be explored at the individual level. A sample of this size is also deemed appropriate for research employing grid methodology (Fransella, et al., 2004; Madill, et al., 2005; Winter, 2003).

The study was successful in achieving a sample that was typical of the caseloads of most social workers. The sample consisted of five males and five females aged between 11 and 17 years. The majority were cared for by
foster cares while two participants were living in residential children’s homes. Half the participants were on Full Care Orders (S31), four were in voluntary care (S20) and one was on an Interim Care Order (S38). Most of the young people had been exposed to some form of abuse and/or neglect.

5.4.3 Recruitment

Problems in the recruitment of participants were encountered in the pilot study (Powell, 2010) and the current study. Busy social workers were often slow to respond to requests for help or did not respond at all. This was the case even after the Head of Children’s Social Care had given his support for the study. Even when consent from social workers had been obtained, the recruitment process didn’t always run smoothly. Three foster carers reported that the young people did not wish to take part and one participant was met at school but decided he did not wish to proceed with the interview, and was withdrawn from the study. These barriers and obstacles in the recruitment of LAC, which include obtaining consent from multiple gatekeepers (e.g. parents, social workers, senior social work managers, foster carers) have been reported in the literature (Butler & Williamson, 1994; Munro, Holmes, & Ward, 2005; Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Rees (2012) suggests that this is one of the main reasons why empirical work involving looked after children is based on small, purposive samples, case file audits or views of social workers.

5.4.4 Four Field Map

The Four Field Map was used to assess the felt ‘closeness’ of relationships by the participants but it was found to be poor at differentiating between different relationships as most helpers were positioned in the first three areas of the map. It is possible that some participants misinterpreted the instructions which casts doubt on some of the findings. Instead of making a judgement on the felt closeness of each relationship relative to all other
relationships, some participants appear to have compared people within specific domains or context e.g. all the people in the family or all the people at school. As a result, teachers and friends were recorded as being as close to the participant as their parent.

5.5 Original contribution to knowledge

This is the only study to have used a Dependency Grid with young people in care and it is one of only two known studies to have used a Dependency Grid with school aged children to examine social support. The second study by Gannon (1994) examined the dispersion of dependency of children in a school context and it therefore had a narrower focus than the current investigation.

This study explored the use of the Dependency Grid with individual cases and described the strengths and weaknesses of using the tool to investigate the support networks of young people in care. The findings not only contribute to existing knowledge on the use of the Dependency Grid with young people, they also add to the small but important body of literature on the support networks of LAC.

The study has made an important contribution to existing theory and knowledge in relation to the dispersion of dependency in young people who are looked after. It has been found that young people in care disperse their dependencies rather than concentrate them on their carers or those with whom they have a close relationship, as the theory would predict. The findings from the Four Field Map add a further dimension to the understanding of social support and attachment relationships.
5.6 Implications for professional practice

Individual social workers and members of the reference group were positive about the Dependency Grid, as were the young people who completed it. It was considered to be a helpful tool for exploring young people’s relationships with their carers and also for investigating young people’s expectations of care from their parents following abuse and neglect. One social worker suggested that it would be a useful addition to the annual review process for LAC by providing the child’s perspective on their relationships. I think this is an unlikely use of the dependency grid, as it is time-consuming and labour intensive to complete and therefore it is not a tool that would be used in routine assessments or screening. The current study found that the dependency grid interview took approximately 35 minutes to an hour to complete, depending on the level of engagement of the participant. Furthermore, it is not suitable for use with young children or young people with learning difficulties who would find the cognitive demands of such an interview quite challenging.

5.6.1 Role of Educational Psychologists (EPs)

The Dependency Grid can add to the repertoire of assessment tools available to psychologists, including EPs, by providing a relationship based assessment tool which recognises the child’s entire support network. As one of the few practitioners to work across contexts, EPs are in a strong position to be able to use the information gained from the Dependency Grid interview to affect change for young people and help build resilience. Toland and Carrigan (2011) argue that the concept of resilience, which has its roots in ecological models (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1999, 2005), is compatible with the interactionalist paradigm that has been widely adopted by the profession. The authors suggest that a resilience perspective should inform EP practice and the Dependency Grid fits well with this ethos by helping to identify areas of risk and resilience in terms of relationships and social support.
For educational psychologists (EPs) who are engaged in work with social care, the Dependency Grid offers a structured way of eliciting information from young people about how they perceive their support network. It also highlights how the individual construes themselves and significant others. Such information might be important in care planning and designing interventions that strengthen young people's relationships and improve the support available to them. For instance, it was found that participants were more inclined to seek support from their female foster carers than their male foster carers and this type of information could be used to strengthen the support network and increase the young person's resilience.

It is envisaged that the standard procedure developed in this study could be followed by most psychologists and professionals who are already familiar with test procedures and assessments of young people. However, training may be required in relation to the analysis and interpretation of the grid and also to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to make effective use of the qualitative interview. Many EPs are already familiar with Personal Construct Psychology and its methods and would be able to make use of this technique in their case work (Burnham, 2008; Clarke, 1999; Hardman, 2001; e.g. Ravenette, 1999; Woods & Farrell, 2006).

5.7 Suggestions for future research

One of the recommendations from the evaluation of the Dependency Grid was that it needs to be made shorter by reducing the number of situations, so that it takes less time to complete it. This is certainly possible as a number of other studies have used Dependency Grids with less than half the number of problem situations used in the current study, and Walker (1997) suggests that there is no loss of validity or reliability with smaller grids. Nagy (1988), for instance, used a 10 problem grid to investigate the psychosocial adjustment of amputees; and Rosotti, Winter and Watts (2006)
used a grid with a list of twelve dependency situations. Further research is needed to look at ways to reduce the number of situations used in the Dependency Grid without diminishing its usefulness. This could be achieved by examining the measure in psychometric terms or alternatively by selecting a narrower list of situations based on the views of participants and/or professionals who work with LAC.

The findings from the current study suggest that there are differences in the way young people depend on carers, birth family, and friends. Research is needed to examine the implications of these different ways of depending on others, particularly in terms of the young person’s adjustment. It may also have implications for the stability of care placements and school placements, as low levels of dependency may signal a lack of investment in particular relationships or indeed vulnerability in one or more contexts. Linked to this, a potentially valuable study would be to investigate how the Dependency Grid can be used to guide interventions to promote change. It would certainly be possible to use the grid findings to identify where interventions should be targeted e.g. improving the individual’s use of support from teachers or male carer, but it may also be possible to develop the interview to explore avenues for increasing the young person’s use of support from particular helpers. This would draw on personal construct theory and its methods to elucidate how the person construes the situation before examining the contrast position, where they seek support and make greater use of specific helpers. By following a line of questioning which explores how change from the first position to the second can be made possible, useful information can be obtained which can be fed back to young people and their significant others, on changes that can be made at a behavioural or psychological level that might increase the helper’s role as support provider. This piece of research would go some way to addressing what Kelly and others see as the main criteria for judging validity; that of the usefulness of the theory and technique (Fransella et al., 2004).
A small number of validity and reliability studies exist on the use of the dependency Grid technique but these are based largely on adult and late adolescent populations. Further work is needed to establish the Dependency Grid’s credentials as a valid and reliable tool with young people. As a constructivist tool, this need not be within a positivist paradigm, although Winter (2003) suggests that the use of a standard grid and the collection of normative data would increase its acceptance as a clinical and research tool in mainstream psychology and psychotherapy.

Another area for study would be to investigate the use of the Dependency Grid with a larger sample of LAC and including a comparison group consisting of young people living at home with their families. This would confirm whether the dispersion of dependency found in the LAC sample is different from the general population and it could be used to explore the dependency relationships between the two groups. For instance, it would be interesting to know whether dependency on carers is qualitatively and quantitatively different to the dependency on parents of young people in the general population.

Further research is needed to investigate whether the Dependency Grid can predict or differentiate between young people according to their social, emotional and behavioural functioning. This would lend support to existing research into the effect of social support on wellbeing.

From an EP perspective, the Dependency Grid could be developed to explore students’ help seeking in schools and colleges by generating a list of situations that focus exclusively on the learning environment. This could be used with individuals to discover how extensive or limited their help-seeking and support is and to investigate why a person might seek support in one subject or context and not others, which might lead to helpful interventions e.g. change in teaching style, confidence building exercises etc. The use of PCP methods in education and learning contexts is not new.
but this work has been mainly concerned with the repertory grid technique (e.g. Dobling, 1999; Kreber, Castleden, Erfani, Lim, & Wright, 2003).
6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Chapters 1 and 2 drew attention to the vulnerability of looked after children and discussed the role of social support as a resilience-enhancing factor. Understanding the social support networks of young people in care is consistent with current thinking based on ecological models and approaches of assessment and intervention (Jack, 2001). However, the development of appropriate tools to assess social support has been hampered by conceptual and methodological difficulties.

The present study set out to examine the use of an adapted version of George Kelly’s Dependency Grid for investigating the availability and use of social support by young people in care. The flexibility of the Dependency Grid for examining multi-relationships and its strong theoretical origins was seen as a major advantage over existing measures of social support.

In the remainder of this chapter, the main research findings will be summarised and discussed alongside the research aim and objectives.

6.1 Summary of the main findings and concluding comments

1. To determine if the Dependency Grid is an appropriate tool for assessing the support networks of young people in care, with particular reference to its ability to identify meaningful patterns in young people’s relationships:-

a. Relationship with birth family, carers, friends and others.
b. Who people depend on most? Who is depended on the least?

- Common patterns in the association between situations and helpers were found across the sample of ten Dependency Grids, which confirmed that the grid data was not random but reflected individual
decisions made by the participants. These patterns were verified by the young people and also by four of the young people’s social workers, which gives some support to the main aim of this study: that of establishing whether the Dependency Grid is able to identify meaningful patterns in the young people’s relationships.

- Whether or not a young person would seek support from a particular member of their support network was partly a matter of circumstance (e.g. the helper’s availability or level of involvement in the young person’s life) and partly due to interpersonal factors (e.g. the skills and attributes of the helper). It is possible that these decisions were also based on deeper, unverbalized psychological factors, such as the participant’s view of themselves and the dependability of others.

- The significance of each helper was assessed in two ways: The number of situations each helper was turned to for support by the participant, and whether the helper was a specialist (i.e. help for a given situation could not be obtained from anyone else) or a generalist (help for a given situation could be obtained from one or more persons). Four groups were identified based on the frequency of ‘calls’ made on particular helpers. The majority of participants showed high dependency on carers. A second group showed high dependency on birth family members, a third group looked mainly to their friends for support, and one person showed a preference for the support of her boyfriend. This pattern is not dissimilar from the findings of other studies which have examined the social support networks of young people in care (e.g. Bailey, 2009; Schlosser, 1996), which adds weight to the validity of these results.

- Birth family was found to be a limited source of support for most participants. Only two participants showed a strong preference for birth family support over other providers, especially help from their mothers. Friends were important to most participants, but on the
whole, there were few situations where support was sought from siblings, foster siblings, teachers and social workers. Though limited, the support from teachers and social workers was for some, their only source of help with specific problems. This result illustrates the importance of examining the contribution made by different sources rather than just the totality of support from each provider.

- Differences were found in the allocation of dependencies across helpers with a similar role relationship. Thus, it was possible to differentiate between individual friends, siblings, parents and carers using the Dependency Grid. In general there was greater dependency on female care-givers compared to male care-givers (e.g. birth mother compared to birth father and female foster carer compared to male foster carer). This was attributed to the absence of birth fathers and their role as perpetrators of abuse. In the case of male foster carers, their lesser role was attributed to interpersonal factors and possible developmental changes in the relationship between male care-givers and young people during adolescence, which has been found in studies of the general population (e.g. Calarossi & Eccles, 2003; Levitt et al., 2007).

- A weak negative correlation was found between emotional closeness, as measured using the Four Field Map (Sturgess et al., 2001), and the provision of social support. Putting aside the methodological issues associated with the use of the Four Field Map, the finding suggests that attachment or ‘felt closeness’ did not influence the help-seeking decisions of the participants. Furthermore, it also suggests that the Dependency Grid, with its emphasis on help-seeking, did not capture the emotional significance of relationships to the young people in care. Of course, this is not necessarily a weakness of the dependency grid but rather a problem of social support measures in general. Indeed, other research has found that close emotional ties and social support are not synonymous (e.g. Wellmann and Wortley, 1990; Won, 2009).
Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that closeness is a better measure of the quality of the relationship, as some close relationships can be a source of stress and conflict. This was certainly the case for some of the participants in this study and is likely to be true of other children in care. Further research is recommended to examine the significance of these two dimensions (felt closeness and social support) on the adjustment of young people in care. For instance, it would be interesting to study the separate and combined effect of these two variables on young people’s wellbeing.

- In this study, the list of network members who were investigated using the Dependency Grid, were generated in the first phase of the interview using the Four Field Map (Sturgess et al., 2001). It is my belief that a similar list can be achieved without the use of the Four Field Map, by using a similar structure to the interview, so that people are encouraged to consider their key relationships in different areas of their life. Some additional work is needed to confirm that this is the case.

  c. **Whether a person lacks support or has a highly integrated network of supportive relationships**

  d. **Whether a person is overly self-reliant**

- Consistent with existing research, this study found that network size was a poor indicator of social support. A weak relationship was found between the size of the support network and the use of available support. This finding highlights the importance of psychological variables that mediate between the perceived availability of help, and the decision to seek support from individual helpers (i.e. personal constructs or dependency constructs). It is relevant to the design of interventions to improve social support, as
it suggests that simply increasing a person’s social network may not be sufficient for improving their perceived level of support.

- In Kellian theory, the adequacy of social support is judged by how the person allocates their dependencies, rather than by the size of the support network. Kelly (1955) argued that a dispersed dependency is preferable to one that is concentrated, as the latter, which Kelly saw as characteristic of the dependency relationships of children and a sign of immaturity in adults, leaves the person vulnerable to the loss of supportive relationships. This study explored how the Dependency Grid could be used to assess the adequacy of a young person’s support network in terms of how they allocate their dependencies. This proved to be more successful at a detailed level of analysis, in terms of ‘who the person depends on for what’, than at a more general level using statistical measures of dispersion.

- Contrary to Kelly’s theory, the study found that most participants had a dispersed pattern of dependency rather than a concentrated pattern of dependency. As the study is based on a small sample, further research is needed to confirm this pattern by examining the dispersion of dependency in a larger sample of LAC and non-LAC populations. As it stands, this finding suggests that Kelly’s theory about the development of dependency relationships during childhood may not hold for some children, especially those who are not cared for on a day-to-day basis by their immediate family. The dispersion of dependency among children in care may be a resilient position to take, given the fragile and temporary nature of some care placements and care-giving relationships. The finding is not a rejection of Kelly’s theory but suggests that the theory needs to be extended to recognise the impact of certain care-giving environments on children’s dependency relationships.
Independence or self-reliance is a dimension that is missing from virtually all social support measures but was investigated using the Dependency Grid by including ‘self’ as a resource option for managing events. Previous research by Chiari et al (1994) found that adults with poor experiences of parental care were more self-reliant than those with good experiences of parental care. In the current study, ‘self’ was one of the least used options by the participants, which may be because it was ignored or not fully understood by the respondents. Some minor changes to the methodology were discussed in Chapter 5, in line with the recommendations by Walker (1997), in order to strengthen this aspect of the assessment. Interestingly, the study found that ‘self’ was frequently selected by two participants who showed high dependency on their birth family and low dependency on carers. In this context, self can be understood as an option for people who are reluctant or unable to rely on the support of key adults. Further research is needed to investigate this hypothesis in more detail.

The categorisation of situations into two ‘types’ of support (emotional support and practical support), allowed for a more detailed analysis of the help-seeking intentions of respondents and the provision of support by different helpers, including those with a similar role relationship. For instance, it was possible to compare the number of situations for which help was sought from birth family members as compared with carers, friends and others. Friends, on the whole, were a good source of emotional support but were not relied on for practical help. In contrast, carers and parents were commonly turned to for practical support as well as emotional support. Consequently, the participants relied on fewer helpers to meet their practical needs compared to their emotional needs. The range of helpers who could be relied on for support with emotional events varied. Most had a choice of helpers for dealing with situations such as a hospital stay, but were selective in obtaining help for other emotional events, such
as problems with carers or birth family. It is possible that this level of
detail could prove useful in shoring up support for young people who
are faced with particular difficulties.

- The Dependency Grid identified at least two young people who were
  considered to be in a relatively vulnerable position due to their high
dependency on helpers who were not available or able to meet some
of these needs (e.g. parents or friends). It would be helpful to study
these two individuals in more detail to gain a better understanding of
their position.

2. To develop the best method(s) for analysing the Dependency Grid
data, in terms of ease of analysis and ability to provide a meaningful
interpretation of the individual’s results.

- A key objective for the study was to consider the best method for
  analysing the raw data in the Dependency Grids. Several statistical
measures of dispersion were investigated but were found to be poor
at summarising the dispersion in the grids and differentiating between
the grids in the sample.

- Bar charts were the most useful method for reporting on the data in
the dependency grids. The bar charts showed the frequency of calls
made on different helpers and the types of support sought from them.
It was also possible to gain a sense of the dispersion and diversity of
support for each participant. Bar charts were also used to display the
use or level of support each participant had available to them in
managing the range of situations assessed by the Dependency Grid.
Bar charts were easily understood by the four social workers who
commented on the grid findings, and by using bar charts, the visual
information could be digested quickly and easily.
• POSAC, which was described as a form of ordinal factor analysis, was also useful in detailing the organisation of relationships and for identifying specialist and generalist providers of support. Unfortunately errors were found in the computer analysis of some grids, which obviously limits its use.

• The qualitative interview method that was used to examine the personal constructs used by participants in their discriminations between different helpers was not fully explored within this study due to time limitations. Although the young people often struggled to access verbal labels to communicate their constructs, it is seen as a potential area for further research in understanding and exploring the significance of relationships in the child’s life.

Practical utility

• The Dependency Grid received a favourable evaluation from participants who completed the grid and also from social workers and community workers who reviewed the grid. The completion of the grid on a laptop computer was seen by participants as a positive adaptation of the original pencil and paper method.

• The Dependency Grid was found to be relatively time consuming to complete and analyse and therefore it is best reserved for more detailed investigations with individuals rather than as a screening tool or routine assessment.

• Several participants recommended that the Dependency Grid interview should be shorter, with fewer situations to consider. This will need to be taken forward in the next phase of development.

• None of the participants showed any ill-effects from taking part in the study but the study was based on a sample of willing volunteers.
rather than a clinical population. Cearly there is the potential for young people to be affected by the content and nature of the Dependency Grid interview and for this reason I would not recommend its use with young people with serious mental health problems or emotional vulnerability. As with all assessments, practitioners will need to exercise a degree of professional judgement about the suitability of the Dependency Grid with certain individuals and populations.

- It is acknowledged that the Dependency Grid, like the Repertory Grid, can be used in isolation from its theoretical roots but knowledge of PCP is desireable in order to take full advantage of this interview tool.

To conclude, the present study has made several contributions to theory and practice. This study has shown that the Dependency Grid can be used to obtain a comprehensive picture of the use and availability of support for young people in care, at varying levels of detail, and meets many of the criteria defined by Power, Champion and Aris (1988) for determining whether an instrument is a ‘good’ measure of social support. To some extent, the study has shown how the Dependency Grid can be used to explore the different ways in which the individual construes and makes sense of their relationships. Further research is needed to investigate the conceptual issues and implications concerned with social support and close emotional ties, and also to establish the validity and reliability of the Dependency Grid and its potential as a tool for intervention.
7 REFERENCES


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Appendix 1: Instructions for completing the Dependency Grid

1. Imagine you were going to do something in front of an audience or spectators, like a school play, concert, football match or other sport. Now suppose each of the people whose names you have written at the top of the columns in the grid were around at the time. Which ones, if any, could you expect to be there to see you? Put a tick or an X below each of their names in the first row of squares.

2. Next, if you had problems with school work and each of the people whose names you have written at the top of the columns in the grid were around at the time. Which ones, if any, could you turn to for help? Put a tick or an X below each of their names in the row of squares.

3. Who could you turn to for help if you were being bullied or picked on by others?

4. If you were feeling angry, who could calm you down?

5. Who could you talk to if something was bothering you or worrying you?

6. Who could you borrow money from if you needed it?

7. Who could you contact if you were feeling lonely?

8. Who could you seek help from if you were having problems with your carers/the adults who look after you?

9. If you were feeling sad, who could you contact to cheer you up?

10. If you failed or messed up at something, who could you turn to to make you feel better?

11. Who could you depend on to look after you if you were feeling unwell?

12. If you had a secret that you wanted to share with someone, who could you tell it to?

13. Who could you contact if you were looking to have a good time?

14. Who could you turn to for help if you got into serious trouble e.g. with the police?

15. If you wanted to join a club or do an activity and you didn’t want to do it by yourself, who could you ask to accompany you?
16. Who could you expect to stand up for you or argue your corner?

17. Who, out of all the names in the columns, tries to make you feel proud or good about yourself?

18. Who could you seek help from if you had a letter, a form to complete, or set of instructions and you were having problems understanding it?

19. Who can you rely on to make sure that you look your best (i.e. ensure that you keep yourself clean and that you have suitable clothes)?

20. Who could you ask for a ‘lift’ or help to get some place?

21. Who could you seek help from if you were having problems with your family?

22. Who, out of all the people in the columns, makes you feel loved or special?

23. Who, out of all the people in the columns, makes you feel listened to and understood?

24. If you had an appointment (e.g doctors/ dentist/ job interview), who could you rely on to make sure that you got there?

25. If you were in hospital, who would come to visit you?
## Appendix 2: The Dependency Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex:</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Year: 7 8 9 10 11</th>
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<td>SELF</td>
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<td>Performed in front of others</td>
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<td>Problems with school work</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Bullying</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Angry</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Share troubles and worries</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Need money</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Felt lonely</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Problems with carers</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feel better when sad</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fail</td>
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<td>Unwell</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Share a secret</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Good time</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Serious trouble</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Company</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Stick up for you</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Feel proud/ good</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Understand</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Look your best</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Transport</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Problems with family</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Make you feel loved/ special</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Listened to/ understood</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Keep appointment</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Visit at hospital</td>
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</table>
Appendix 3: Interview with Young Person (Evaluation)

How easy was the Dependency Grid to complete?

Are there things that made it difficult to complete?

Is there any way it could be made easier to complete?

Is there anything (else) about the Dependency Grid that you would change? Format/situations?

Did it help having to complete it on a laptop instead of pencil and paper?

Do you feel that the ticks in the grid are an accurate reflection of your support? Why/how come could you explain?
Appendix 4: Questionnaire for Social workers

Social Worker Feedback Questionnaire

I am interested in gaining your views on the usefulness of the Dependency Grid measure used in my research. I would be very grateful if you could complete the following questionnaire.

Feel free to use bullet points to answer any of the questions below or to make any comments.

1. How accurate/valid do you think the results are? Do you think they reflect the young person’s relationships? (place an X in the box below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very accurate</th>
<th>Somewhat accurate</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Somewhat inaccurate</th>
<th>Very inaccurate</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Any Comments?

2. How useful are the assessment findings to you? (place an X in the appropriate box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very helpful</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
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<th>Very unhelpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Any Comments?

318
3. In the table below, please indicate how useful you found each result using the following five point scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very helpful</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uncertainty Index (the statistical measure of dispersion)</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Relationships chart (the help sought from each person in the young person’s network)</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations chart (number of helpers the young person would use for each situation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>POSAC graph (hierarchical arrangement of supportive relationships)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. Do you think this assessment would be useful/helpful with other young people?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. What circumstances do you think an assessment using the Dependency Grid would be helpful to you/other social workers?

6. How might you/other social workers use the results/findings from a Dependency Grid assessment?
7. Are there any individuals or circumstances in which an assessment using the Dependency Grid would be unsuitable or unhelpful?

8. Other comments (including general likes/ dislikes)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire
Appendix 5: Questions/ prompts for reference group

The reference group were given paper copies of the grid used in the study and were shown the computer version. They were asked three broad questions:

- Whether they as professionals assessed young people’s support networks and if so, how?
- General thoughts on the situations or items in the grid.
- Advantages and disadvantages of the Dependency Grid measure.
Appendix 6: Young person’s Information sheet

Hi

Would you be willing to spare an hour of your time to help me with a research project to test a type of questionnaire for investigating young people’s support networks (the people who help and support you)?

Please take a look at the information sheet which explains why the research is being done and what it will involve for you.

Your social worker and carer have been told about the study and will be able to help you to with this decision.

I will contact you in a few days to see if you would like to take part.

Many thanks,

Martin Powell
Child and Educational Psychologist
Research Study: An evaluation of the Dependency method for investigating the support networks of young people in care.

Why is this study being done?

Relationships are important. We know that it is good for us to have people who can help us in our day-to-day lives.

The aim of this study is to test out / evaluate a type of questionnaire, known as a Dependency Grid, for investigating young people’s social support networks. I hope that the Dependency Grid will be useful in helping adults to better understand and support young people in care.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

I want to interview young people from Stockport who are aged 11 to 18 years-old, who are living with foster carers or living in a residential home.

What will I be expected to do?

I will ask you to list the important people in your life, such as family, friends, carers, neighbours and teachers, and then complete a questionnaire on a laptop computer about who you would turn to for help in different situations.

I will also ask you some questions about your answers and also what you think about the questionnaire.

With your permission, I would like to tape record the interview, as it will save me from making a lot of notes when you are talking. Also, I would like to obtain some basic facts from you or your social worker about your life since you have been in care e.g. how long you have lived with your current carers, how many places you have lived in, how old you were when you came into care etc.

What if I don’t want to answer a question that you ask me?

You do not have to answer a question unless you want to, and if you choose not to answer a question, you will not be asked to explain why.

What if I agree to take part and later change my mind?

That is fine. You can withdraw from the study at any point and your information will not be used.

How long will it take and where will you meet me?
Each interview will take about 40 minutes to an hour to complete. I can arrange to see you at home or at school, whichever you prefer.

**What will you do with the information I give you?**

I will talk to your social worker to see what they think about the Dependency Grid.

I will write up the findings from the study. In the report I will be quoting you and the other people I have spoken to, but I will make sure that nothing is written that would allow people to identify you or the people you talk to me about.

I will send you a summary of the overall findings at the end of the study. The findings will not contain your individual details, but what I found from all the interviews.

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

The study is about young people’s support networks and some young people might get upset or feel uncomfortable when they think about or talk about their relationships.

If you were to become upset, then we would immediately stop the interview and you will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the study. I would speak to your social worker and carer to ensure that you had access to the right support.

**Additional Information**

I work as a Child and Educational Psychologist for [Redacted] Council. Part of my job involves working with young people in care, their social workers, carers and birth families. I have an up to date enhanced CRB.

The University of Manchester’s public indemnity insurance provides cover for this research.

If you have any questions about the study at all, please feel free to contact me using the details below.

If you are unhappy with your experience and wish to make a complaint then you can contact the project supervisor, Dr Garry Squires using the contact details below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Supervisor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martin Powell</td>
<td>Dr. Garry Squires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Child and Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>The University of Manchester,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ellen Wilkinson Building,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Oxford Road,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Manchester M13 9PL.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tel. 0161 275 3546</td>
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</table>
Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet 😊
Appendix 7: Young person's consent form

YOUNG PERSON’S CONSENT FORM

Research Study: An evaluation of the Dependency Grid as a method for investigating the support networks of young people in care.

Name of Researcher: Martin Powell, Senior Child and Educational Psychologist, Stockport Services to People Psychology Service

Name of Project Supervisor: Dr Garry Squires, Director of the Professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology, School of Education, University of Manchester

Name of young person: _______________________________________

Date of birth:_______________

Name of Foster Carer:_________________________________________

Name of Social Worker: ________________________________________

To be completed by the named young person – please tick boxes below

☐ I have read and understood the information sheet about this study
☐ I agree to take part in the study
☐ I am happy for the researcher to obtain facts and figures from my social worker about my care history.
☐ I understand that the researcher will protect my anonymity
☐ I understand that all information will be kept confidential. The only exception to this is if I tell the researcher that I or another young person may be at risk of harm.
☐ I am happy for the researcher to share my results with my social worker for the purpose of evaluating the usefulness of the Dependency Grid.
☐ I agree to my words being quoted in the research

Signature……………………………………….. Date: ……………….
Debrief Sheet

I hope you found it a pleasant experience.

If you have any questions or are worries about the research, then please do not hesitate to contact me on the contact details below.

If you have any immediate concerns regarding the study, or you are feeling upset or worried, then please speak to your teacher, carer or social worker straight away.

If you feel you need to talk to someone about how you are feeling then your social worker or I can put you in touch with professionals who are skilled in helping young people.

If you are unhappy with your experience and wish to make a complaint then you can contact the project supervisor, Dr Garry Squires using the contact details below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Martin Powell</th>
<th>Dr Garry Squires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>The University of Manchester,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>School of Education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ellen Wilkinson Building,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Oxford Road,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manchester M13 9PL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel. 0161 474 3870</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:garry.squires@manchester.ac.uk">garry.squires@manchester.ac.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:martin.powell@stockport.gov.uk">martin.powell@stockport.gov.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Useful telephone numbers / Websites

The list below contains contact details of confidential organisations that offer children and young people advice and support over the phone, via the Internet or face to face.

ChildLine 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

YoungMinds www.youngminds.org.uk

Samaritans 08457 90 90 90 www.samaritans.org.uk

www.Kooth.com
Beacon Counselling 07773032759
Relate Counselling 0161 442 2443
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service 0161 419 2050
Appendix 9: Parent/ Carer/ Social worker/ Teacher Information sheet

Information Sheet for Parent/ Carer/ Social Worker/ School:

Research Study: A Personal Construct approach to understanding the support needs of young people in care: An exploratory study using a Dependency Grid

Why is this study being done?

The aim of this study is to investigate how young people in care perceive and make use of social support. This may be helpful in identifying areas of vulnerability and could inform professionals about how best to intervene to develop a young person’s resilience.

There is a growing body of literature into the nature and benefits of social support for children and young people, particularly in Europe and America, but little is known about the support networks of children and young people in local authority care.

The research is being undertaken for my doctoral degree.

Why has this young person been chosen?

The young person fits the study’s inclusion criteria:

- Young people in local authority care aged between 11 to 18 years.
- Young people who are on a school roll.
- Young people without intellectual difficulties and Tier 3/4 mental health problems.

What will happen?

Each young person will complete an hour long face to face interview, which will be tape recorded and later transcribed.

The interviews will involve asking each young person to consider a set of supplied situations and problems and to identify who, from their list of significant people, they would turn to for help with each problem if the people in the list were available. This information will be recorded in a matrix or grid (which is referred to as a Dependency Grid).

Qualitative information about the meanings or constructs each young person uses in making their discriminations between different helpers will be uncovered by asking the participants to explain why one person or a group is relied on for a given situation.
in preference to others (“why would you use these and not these for this situation or problem?”). This qualitative data will be recorded in the interview notes and investigated using thematic analysis to identify common themes across the individuals in the research sample.

Biographical data about each participant will be obtained from social workers. This will include information about their legal status, reason for coming into care, number and type of placements they have had, and how long they have been living in their current placement. Information about the frequency of contact with family members will also be collected.

**Where will the interviews take place?**

Each young person will be given the option of being interviewed at school or at home, subject to the agreement of the head teacher or carer.

**What if the young person is unhappy with a question or line of questioning?**

It will be explained to the young person that they have the option of not answering questions and they will not be asked to give a reason for their decision.

**Withdrawal from the research**

The young person, teacher, carer, parent or social worker can ask for the young person to be withdrawn from the research at any point and any information relating to the young person will not be used.

**What will you do with the information?**

The researcher will ensure the young person’s anonymity within the research and all information will be treated confidentially, unless there are safeguarding concerns. The researcher will discuss with the young person what information can be shared with their social worker or carer, as this information may help to improve the support that is available to them.

The interview data will be analysed and reported in a doctoral thesis. This will include quotations from the young people. The research and its findings may be published in an academic journal.

A summary of the overall findings will be sent to the young people, their social workers and carers once the study has been completed.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**
The questions in the interview are unlikely to upset the young person, however, in the event that a young person were to become upset, the researcher would immediately stop the interview and access support for the young person from a familiar adult (e.g. foster carer or an appropriate adult in school).

The young person’s social worker will be informed and information about local counselling and support services will be provided.

Each young person who completes the interview will be followed-up within 12-24 hours by telephone contact with their carers to monitor their reaction to the study.

In the event that a young person has been upset by their participation in the study, then the research will be terminated and advice sought from the University.

**Consent**

Written consent for the young person’s participation in the study will be obtained from the young person and their parent and/or social worker.

**Additional Information**

I work as a Senior Child and Educational Psychologist for [Council name] and I have an up to date enhanced CRB.

The University of Manchester’s public indemnity insurance provides cover for this research investigation.

If you have any questions about the study at all, please feel free to contact me using the details below.

If you are unhappy with your experience and wish to make a complaint then you can contact the project supervisor, Dr Garry Squires using the contact details below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Martin Powell</th>
<th>Dr Garry Squires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Child and Educational Psychologist</td>
<td>The University of Manchester, School of Education Ellen Wilkinson Building, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tel. 0161 275 3546
Email:garry.squires@manchester.ac.uk.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet**
Appendix 10: Parent/ Social worker consent form

PARENT/ SOCIAL WORKER’S CONSENT FORM

Research Study: A Personal Construct approach to understanding the support needs of young people in care: An exploratory study using a Dependency Grid.

Name of Researcher: Martin Powell, Senior Child and Educational Psychologist, Psychology Service

Name of Project Supervisor: Dr Garry Squires, Director of the Professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology, School of Education, University of Manchester

Name of young person: _________________________

Date of birth:_______________

Name of Foster Carer:________________________________

To be completed by the young person’s parent or social worker (or person with legal responsibility for the above young person) – please tick boxes below

☐ I have read and understood the information sheet regarding this study
☐ I agree to the young person taking part in the study
☐ I understand that I can request that he/she is withdrawn from the study at any time, without giving any reason.
☐ I understand that relevant information about his/her care history and data will be collected during the study

Print Name:……………………………………………………………………………………

Signature………………………………………………Date: …………..………..

Designation/ Relationship to young person…………………………………………
Dear Head teacher,

I am conducting a research study for a doctoral degree with the University of Manchester which is concerned with understanding the relationships and support needs of young people in care (please see the attached information sheet).

One of your pupils, _____Insert young person’s name____, has agreed to take part in the study, and consent for his/her participation has been obtained from their parent/ social worker (see attached copy of the consent form).

The young person has indicated that he/she would prefer to be interviewed at school and therefore I am contacting you to ask if it would be possible to see the pupil for approximately an hour during the school day.

I would like to visit your school to interview the student on ___insert date and time__. Please could you send a reply by e-mail to confirm that you agree to the student being interviewed in school and also to confirm if the date and time of the appointment is convenient.

If you have any questions or would like to know more about the research then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Powell
Senior Child and Educational Psychologist
Appendix 12: Provisional Approval Letter from the Research Ethics Committee

Mr Martin Powell  
Senior Child and Educational Psychologist  
School of Education

Martin.powell@stockport.gov.uk  
ref: ethics/11189  
29 September 2011

Dear Mr Powell

Research Ethics Committee 1

Powell, Squires: A Personal Construct approach to understanding the support needs of young people in care: An exploratory study using a Dependency Grid (Ref 11189)

I write to confirm that, at its meeting on 15th September 2011, the Committee reviewed the above research project, and gave it a provisional favourable ethical opinion. Before ethical approval can be granted, the Committee requires that your application is revised to address / clarify the following points:

Ethics Application Form

There is an assumption that the children approached will all be enrolled in a school. This therefore needs to be added into the exclusion criteria as children not enrolled in school will not be eligible.

Section 3.9: The committee feel that 48 hours is too long to wait to contact guardians if the child has become distressed. This should be changed to 12 – 24 hours.

Section 7.6: Data storage time needs to be amended to 10 years to be in line with the University policy.

The page on the 7 Question questionnaire needs to be taken out as it is no longer related to what needs to be stated.

Combining the strengths of UMIST and  
The Victoria University of Manchester
Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

The information sheet needs to include the following information:

- Insurance
- Complaints procedure
- Who has reviewed the study
- Contact details

The PIS needs to include the information that any disclosure of illegal activity will be passed on to the appropriate authorities.

Consent Form

The consent form needs reformatting in the NRES style. Details of this can be found at http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/guidance/consent-guidance-and-forms/?id=21311929_entvrid=57013

The consent form and the information form need to include information that participants will need to consent to the use of quotations.

The consent form needs to have a section for the parent and child to sign.

Other

The committee will need to see a copy of the letter from the school giving permission to the researcher to carry out the study.

A lone worker policy needs to be put together and sent to the committee.

A policy/advice in cases of distress needs to be put together and sent to the committee.

The committee advises that you need to be aware that recruiting from your own case load could be seen as coercive. You should recruit through social workers / colleagues to avoid this.

The Committee also commented that you need to ensure that your role is not ‘fudged’ during the study. For this study, you have the role of researcher, and one of your colleagues could perhaps act as a support mechanism to ensure that there is no overlap.

Please revise the documents based on the above points, highlighting any changes from the original version, and send the revised documents to me by e-mail (katy.boyle@manchester.ac.uk) for consideration by the Chair outside of a Committee meeting.

Combining the strengths of UMIST and
The Victoria University of Manchester
Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

The information sheet needs to include the following information:
- Insurance
- Complaints procedure
- Who has reviewed the study
- Contact details

The PIS needs to include the information that any disclosure of illegal activity will be passed on to the appropriate authorities.

Consent Form

The consent form needs reformatting in the NRES style. Details of this can be found at http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/guidance/consent-guidance-and-forms/71311529_entryId62-67013

The consent form and the information form need to include information that participants will need to consent to the use of quotations.

The consent form needs to have a section for the parent and child to sign.

Other

The committee will need to see a copy of the letter from the school giving permission to the researcher to carry out the study.

A lone worker policy needs to be put together and sent to the committee.

A policy/advice in cases of distress needs to be put together and sent to the committee.

The committee advices that you need to be aware that recruiting from your own case load could be seen as coercive. You should recruit through social workers / colleagues to avoid this.

The Committee also commented that you need to ensure that your role is not ‘fudged’ during the study. For this study, you have the role of researcher, and one of your colleagues could perhaps act as a support mechanism to ensure that there is no overlap.

---------------------------------------------

Please revise the documents based on the above points, highlighting any changes from the original version, and send the revised documents to me by e-mail (katy.boyle@manchester.ac.uk) for consideration by the Chair outside of a Committee meeting.

Combining the strengths of UMIST and The Victoria University of Manchester
This provisional approval is effective for a period of five years and, if the project continues beyond that period, it must be submitted for review. It is the Committee’s practice to warn investigators that they should not depart from the agreed protocol without seeking the approval of the Committee, as any significant deviation could invalidate the insurance arrangements and constitute research misconduct. We also ask that any information sheet should carry a University logo or other indication of where it came from, and that, in accordance with University policy, any data carrying personal identifiers must be encrypted when not held on a university computer or kept as a hard copy in a location which is accessible only to those involved with the research.

Yours sincerely,

Katy Boyle
Secretary to University Research Ethics Committee
Appendix 13: Research Ethical Approval Letter

Mr Martin Powell
Senior Child and Educational Psychologist
School of Education

Martin.powell@stockport.gov.uk

ref: ethics/11189

3 November 2011

Dear Mr Powell

Committee on the Ethics of Research on Human Beings
Powell, Squires: A Personal Construct approach to understanding the support needs of young people in care: An exploratory study using a Dependency Grid (Ref 11189)

I write to confirm that the amendments to the information sheet, ethics application form and consent form and satisfy the concerns of the Committee and that the above project therefore has ethical approval.

The general conditions remain as stated in my letter of 29th September 2011.

Finally, I would be grateful if you could complete and return the attached form at the end of the project or by March 2012, whichever is earlier. When completing this form, please refer to your project as:

“Powell, Squires: A Personal Construct approach to understanding the support needs of young people in care: An exploratory study using a Dependency Grid (Ref 11189)”

We hope the research goes well.

Yours sincerely,

Katy Boyle
Secretary to University Research Ethics Committee
Appendix 14: E-mails confirming amendments to the research plan

From: Garry Squires [Garry.Squires@manchester.ac.uk]
Sent: 29 March 2012 12:05
To: Martin Powell; Michael Wigelsworth
Subject: FW: Changes to participants

Hi Martin,
Just confirming that UREC have agreed to changes in the number of participants as we discussed.

Best wishes
Garry


___________________________________________________________________
From: Gail Divall
Sent: 29 March 2012 12:04
To: Garry Squires
Subject: FW: Changes to participants

Hi Garry,

Please find below confirmation from UREC re changes

Regards

Gail Steeden
PGT & Quality Assurance Administrator
School of Education

Tel: +44(0)161 275 3390
OFFICE HOURS: Wed - Fri between 9-5pm

___________________________________________________________________
From: Timothy Stibbs
Sent: 28 March 2012 14:50
To: Gail Divall
Cc: Eliza Pimlott
Subject: RE: Changes to participants

Dear Gail,

This is just to say that we can treat this as a minor amendment, which we will record on file, so there is no need for further action.

Best wishes
From: Ethics Education  
Sent: 22 March 2012 10:11  
To: Research Ethics  
Subject: FW: Changes to participants  
Importance: High

Hi Eliza,

Please see below information regarding amendments to an already approved UREC form

Many thanks

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/

From: Garry Squires  
Sent: 20 March 2012 16:20  
To: Ethics Education  
Cc: Martin Powell  
Subject: Changes to participants

Hi Gail,

Martin Powell received ethical clearance from UREC. He wishes to increase his participant number from 10 to 14 and decrease the age range slightly to cover the whole of the secondary school range. I am in favour of the changes and from a research design point of view can see clear benefits to the thesis and contribution to knowledge. I can’t see either of these changes increasing the risks to participants, however, we are asking that this request is considered by UREC.

Best wishes

Garry
From: Martin Powell [mailto:martin.powell@stockport.gov.uk]
Sent: 20 March 2012 15:23
To: Garry Squires
Subject: RE: Supervision

Hi Garry

RE: Powell, Squires: A Personal Construct approach to understanding the support needs of young people in care: An exploratory study using a Dependency Grid (Ref 11189)

I am e-mailing to ask if we can seek approval from the ethics panel for an increase in the number of participants, and a change to the age range for my study.

The original plan was to look at emerging patterns among young people in stable and unstable care placements. However, on further reflection, I think it makes more sense for my study to be a methodological investigation of the Dependency Grid, in terms of its utility as an assessment tool for use with young people in care.

My original UREC form will need to be amended so that the age range is changed from 12-16 years to 11 to 18 years. The change will enable me to include participants from the start of secondary school through to care leavers, capturing the adolescent population that social workers typically work with. In making this change, I would like to increase the number of participants recruited to take part in the study from 10 to 14.

Let me know if you require any further information.

Regards

Martin Powell
Senior Child and Educational Psychologist
Appendix 15: GRIDSTAT5 printout

Date: 4/7/2012
Start Time: 10:52:35

Data read from file: Fi.txt
Output written to file: Fiunaligned
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Grid Title: Fi dependency grid

No of Constructs (Rows) = 25
No of Elements (Cols) = 17

Construct Labels
1 Performed in front of others
2 Problems with school work
3 Bullying
4 Angry
5 Share troubles and worries
6 Need money
7 Felt lonely
8 Problems with carers
9 Feel better when sad
10 Fail
11 Unwell
12 Share a secret
13 Good time
14 Serious trouble
15 Company
16 Stick up for you
17 Feel proud/ good
18 Understand
19 Look your best
20 Transport
21 Problems with family
22 Make you feel loved/ special
23 Listened to/ understood
24 Keep appointment
25 Visit at hospital

Element Labels
1 SELF
2 Female foster carer
3 Male foster carer
4 Mum
5 Dad
6 foster brother
7 Foster sister
8 Birth sister (claire)
9 Birth sister (Jenny)
10 brother
11 friend (1)
12 friend (2)
13 friend (3)
14 friend (4)
15 Female support assst
16 Teacher (male)
17 Social Worker

Grid Data

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Dispersion of Dependency in Grid : Pl dependency grid

Total Dependencies: 53 ( = 12.5% of Grid)

Dependency by Rows

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Dependency by Columns
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By Row  By Col
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0.96  0.64  Dispersion of Dependency [Uncertainty Index]

Asymmetric Prediction of Dependency
Uncertainty Coefficients
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Column Dependent : 0.31
Row Dependent    : 0.30
Symmetric Relationship : 0.38

Dependency By Rows
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Dependency By Cols
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Row/Col Dependency Ratio
By Sample Size | 1   | 2   | 3   |
R/C DDI Ratio  | 0.66| 0.79| 0.89|

Hierarchical Construct Analysis for Jessica dependency grid

There were 7 instances of duplicate profiles
Ideal Maximum Profile added.

Coefficients of Weak Monotonicity between the Constructs

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<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.529</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cognitive Complexity \( R_{MX(\mu_2)} \) = 0.880

- **No. of Iterations:** 7
- **Proportion of Profile-Pairs Correctly Represented:** 0.8727
- **Score-Distance Weighted Coefficient:** 0.9997

.predicate

**Hierarchical Relationships for Profile:** 1[A]  Ideal Maximum Profile

Less than Profiles:
- No profiles.

Greater than Profiles:
- 2[B]  friend A
- 3[C]  Female foster carer
- 5[E]  Teacher (male)

- **Hierarchical Relationships for Profile:** 2[B]  friend A

Less than Profiles:
- 1[A]  Ideal Maximum Profile

Greater than Profiles:
- 4[D]  friend B
- 6[F]  Female support assst
8[H] Male foster carer

Hierarchical Relationships for Profile: 3[C] Female foster carer
Less than Profiles:
  1[A] Ideal Maximum Profile
Greater than Profiles:
  7[G] Social Worker
  9[H] Male foster carer

Hierarchical Relationships for Profile: 4[D] Friend B
Less than Profiles:
  2[B] Friend A
Greater than Profiles:
  9[I] Friend C

Hierarchical Relationships for Profile: 5[E] Teacher (male)
Less than Profiles:
  1[A] Ideal Maximum Profile
Greater than Profiles:
  7[G] Social Worker

Hierarchical Relationships for Profile: 6[F] Female support asst
Less than Profiles:
  2[B] Friend A
Greater than Profiles:
  10[J] SELF / Mum / Dad / foster brother / Birth sister (Claire / Birth sister (Jenny)) / brother / friend d

Hierarchical Relationships for Profile: 7[G] Social Worker
Less than Profiles:
  5[E] Teacher (male)
  3[C] Female foster carer
Greater than Profiles:
  8[H] Male foster carer

Hierarchical Relationships for Profile: 8[H] Male foster carer
Less than Profiles:
  2[B] Friend A
Greater than Profiles:
  11[K] Foster sister

Hierarchical Relationships for Profile: 9[I] Friend C
Less than Profiles:
  4[D] Friend B
Greater than Profiles:
  10[J] SELF / Mum / Dad / foster brother / Birth sister (Claire / Birth sister (Jenny)) / brother / friend d

Hierarchical Relationships for Profile: 10[J] SELF / Mum / Dad / foster brother / Birth sister (Claire / Birth sister (Jenny)) / brother / friend d
Less than Profiles:
  5[I] Friend C
  7[G] Social Worker
  6[F] Female support asst
Greater than Profiles:
  11[K] Foster sister

Hierarchical Relationships for Profile: 11[K] Foster sister
Less than Profiles:
  10[J] SELF / Mum / Dad / foster brother / Birth sister (Claire / Birth sister (Jenny)) / brother / friend d
  8[H] Male foster carer
Greater than Profiles:
No profiles.

No. Independent branches = 3 [ 5.0%]
No. Nested branches = 12 [ 21.0%]

Plot Identification for POGAC Configuration
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Coordinates</th>
<th>Freq</th>
<th>Item Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100.00 200.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ideal Maximum Profile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>100.00 180.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>friend A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>100.00 160.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female foster carer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>110.00 110.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>friend B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>120.00 130.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher (male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>70.00 110.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female support asst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>100.00 60.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>00.00 00.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male foster carer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>120.00 70.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>friend c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>100.00 20.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>SELF / Mum / Dad / foster brot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>100.00 0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foster sister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breadth = 0.36
Depth = 0.60

Max Profile Top

+---------------------------------------------------------------+
| 200.0 + A | 180.0 + B | 180.0 + C | 140.0 + |
+---------------------------------------------------------------+
Hierarchical Profile for Problems with school work

200.0 +
1

130.0
70.0 76.0 82.0 88.0 94.0 100.0 106.0 112.0 118.0 124.0
Appendix 16 Four Field Map Analysis

Each helper was recorded in the Four Field Map results according to how close the relationship is to the young person, as measured by the distance from the centre point. The text size for each helper’s role title varied in size according to the proportion of emotional situations and practical situations that were met by each helper. The table below shows how this was calculated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Size</th>
<th>Proportion of emotional situations or Practical situations each helper is turned to for support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0-10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>21-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>31-40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>41-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>51-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>61-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>71-80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>81-90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>91-100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 17: Example Dependency Grid Report for Social Workers

Dependency Grid Assessment Report

Dependency Grid

P1 completed a Dependency Grid, a structured interview used to gather information about a person’s social support network and relationships.

The interview is an assessment of perceived support rather than actual support.

The interview involves:

1. Marking on a grid who s/he would turn to for support in a number of situations (see example below)
2. Answering questions about why s/he would seek help from the people s/he had selected and not others. This seeks information about how the person construes their relationships.

Figure 47: Example of dependency grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Jane</th>
<th>SELF</th>
<th>Foster carer (m)</th>
<th>Foster carer (f)</th>
<th>Mum</th>
<th>Foster brother</th>
<th>Foster sister</th>
<th>Uncle</th>
<th>Aunty</th>
<th>Dad</th>
<th>Social worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex: F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year:11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Performed in front of others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Problems with school work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Share troubles and worries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Need money</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Felt lonely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Problems with carers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Feel better when sad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Unwell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESULTS

Uncertainty Index

The spread or dispersion of marks in the grid was statistically analysed as this can indicate whether a person has access to a wide network of support or is reliant on a few people for help. The score is measured on a scale from 0 to 1, where 1 indicates maximum dispersion and 0 high dependence.

P1’s grid scored 0.64, which suggests that she is reliant on a few people for support from her support network.

Chart showing the number of situations each helper would be turned to for support and the type of support provided (emotional support or practical support)
Chart Summary

- P1 is reliant on a small number of individuals for help from her support network.

- Friend 1 is a significant source of emotional support but offers little in the way of practical help.

- P1’s female foster carer is the second most supportive relationship. P1’s female foster carer provides both practical and emotional support.

- P1’s male foster carer is the 6th provider. The male foster carer was turned to in only three of the twenty five situations listed in the grid.

- Friend 2 is the second most important source of support among P1’s friends but provides no practical support. Friend 2 is supportive in eight out of twenty five situations.

- Little to no help would be sought from friend 3 and friend 4, suggesting that friend 1 and friend 2 are more significant to P1.

- P1 perceived her birth family as limited in its ability to provide her with support. P1’s birth mother, birth father, two sisters and brother were not selected as sources of support for any of the twenty five situations listed in the dependency grid.

- P1’s teacher and support assistant were helpful to P1 in managing emotional and practical issues. This shows the importance of school relationships for P1.

- P1’s social worker and foster sister were more helpful than birth family members but there were few situations in which their help would be enlisted.
Chart showing the number of helpers P1 could call upon for support with each situation

Chart Summary

- P1 is reliant on very few people for practical help but she has a number of people she can turn to for support with emotional events.

- P1 feels that she has a lot of people who make her feel listened to and understood and who support her when she is feeling depressed or sad. P1 also believes that there are many people who would visit her if she had to stay hospital (expression of concern and interest in her wellbeing).
• A small pool of supporters would be accessed in relation to problems with carers or family, managing anger, support during an illness, and providing help with money.

**POSAC Diagram**

The completed dependency grid was statistically analysed to produce a hierarchical model of connections between helpers (see below). The y axis shows the amount of help provided by each helper (i.e. the number of situations each person would be turned to for support). The x axis shows the degree of similarity or difference in the profile of situations met by different helpers. For example, helpers that are clustered together provide help across a similar set of situations. Helpers that provide help across a different set of situations are located at a greater distance from each other.
**Chart Summary**

- Friend 1, female foster carer, and teacher head three independent chains of support i.e. they each provide support for one or more situations that the other two do not.

- Friend 1 provides support for the greatest number of situations, hence her relative position at the top of the hierarchy.

- Support assistant and friend 2 provide support for some (but not all) of the situations served by friend 1.

- The chain of support running through friend 1, friend 2 and friend 3, shows that friend 2 is a substitute for friend 1 for some situations and friend 3 is a substitute for friend 2 and friend 1 in some situations.

- Female foster carer is the second most needed relationship in the hierarchy. Male foster carer and social worker serve as alternative sources of support.

- P1’s male foster carer features lower down in her support hierarchy, providing support for some of the situations met by female foster carer and friend 1.

- Teacher provides support across a number of situations and is higher in the structure to social worker, which indicates that teacher provides help with more situations that social worker.

- P1’s birth family, foster sister and foster brother feature at the bottom of the hierarchy, reflecting their weak position as sources of help and support.
Qualitative Interview

Friends

P1 perceived her friends as very important. She described friend 1 as her best friend and said that they had been friends for a very long time.

P1 felt that friend 1 would be good at supporting her with school/college work because they followed the same curriculum and friend 1 would have a better understanding of the subject:

“[Friend 1] does the same work as me”.

P1 said that friend 1 was good at keeping her calm:

“[Friend 1] calms me down when I’m annoyed.”

She also acknowledged the support of other friends in helping her to calm down when she is annoyed. However, their usefulness was more to do with circumstance and less to do with personal attributes, as she said she was more inclined to lose her temper at school than at home.

P1 seemed to admire friend 1. She said that friend 1 had:

“a nice dress sense”

and P1 respected her friend’s advice on what to wear and her general appearance.

P1 struggled to explain why she would not access help from friend 4 for any of the situations listed in the dependency grid. P1 simply said that they were

“not as close”.

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P1 can count on her friends to help if she was having problems with her family or foster carers. P1 said she was rather private about these matters and would be selective about who she would talk to about her worries and concerns:

“When I’m sad...we sit and talk”. “I don’t share my business with everyone except for them.”

P1 admitted that there were some things that she could not share with her female foster carer and which she could only share with her friends:

“I tell [female foster carer] stuff but not like...stuff I share with my mates.”

P1 hinted at a rather immature dependent relationship with her friends:

“....in the group [of friends] I’m kind of the baby. Friend 1 is the more mature one, and then friend 2 is another mature one. And then there’s me..”

**Female foster carer**

P1 described a close relationship with her female carer, which she explained was because she was a “mummy’s girl”. P1’s female carer was perceived as important in providing practical support but she was unable to say why she would seek support from her carer rather than other helpers for this. For instance, when she was asked about why she would prefer to have her female foster carer look after her if she was unwell rather than someone else (e.g. male carer), she said:

“[female carer] is the only person...don’t know, I just go to her.”

P1’s female carer was also seen as supportive with a number of emotional issues, including bullying and peer problems, and providing help and support if she was in
serious trouble. P1 felt that her carer would address any problems with bullying as she was in regular contact with the school

(“she comes into school [a lot]”).

P1 said her carer would support her if she ever got into serious trouble. She said her carer would listen to her but would not reject her for it:

“She’d probably be angry and shout at me but she’s still there.”

**Male foster carer**

P1’s relationship with her male foster carer was explored through a line of questioning which sought to compare and contrast this relationship with others.

P1 reported that the relationship was important to her but she suggested that she had a closer relationship with her female carer:

“He’s important but not…I’m not really a daddy’s girl. I’m more of a mummy’s girl.”

P1 said that she did not rely on her male carer for very much:

“I speak to him but…that’s it really.”

She also talked about a difference in attitude between her carers over personal issues which led to tension between herself and her male carer:

“[My male carer] doesn’t like me wearing make-up, or having a boyfriend, stuff like that”. [My female carer]…she doesn’t really like me having a boyfriend and wearing makeup but she understands.”
She described mild irritation at her carer’s approach:

“[male carer] is “understanding but like...he’s not mature...he jokes about.....and winds me up.”
Birth family

P1 sought little support from her birth family in comparison with other relationships. When asked about this, P1 referred to the lack of contact with various family members which meant that she didn’t really know them:

“I see my mum, I don’t see my sister, I don’t see my granddad or my dad”.

When asked about the lack of support from her birth mother, P1 explained:

“I have lived with my mum but it just feels like…she’s not like a stranger to me but I don’t feel like I know her.” “Cause I’ve not lived with her for so long.”

There did seem to be great uncertainty about support from her birth father which went beyond a lack of involvement in her life.

“I don’t think my dad [would help]…..I know I don’t”

Social worker

P1 expressed uncertainty about whether or not she would seek support from her social worker due to infrequent contact:

“Don’t know. Don’t see her a lot.”
Appendix 18: Categorisation of the Dependency Grid items by three educational psychologists, in terms of emotional support and practical support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependency Grid Item</th>
<th>Emotional support</th>
<th>Practical support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imagine you were going to do something in front of an audience or spectators,</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>like a school play, concert, football match or other sport. Now suppose each of</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the people whose names you have written at the top of the columns in the grid were</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>around at the time. Which ones, if any, could you expect to be there to see you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put a tick or an X below each of their names in the first row of squares.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next, if you had problems with school work and each of the people whose names you</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have written at the top of the columns in the grid were around at the time. Which</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ones, if any, could you turn to for help? Put a tick or an X below each of their</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>names in the row of squares.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you turn to for help if you were being bullied or picked on by others?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you were feeling angry, who could calm you down?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you talk to if something was bothering you or worrying you?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you borrow money from if you needed it?</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

362
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional support</th>
<th>Practical support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who would you contact if you were feeling lonely?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you seek help from if you were having problems with your carers/ the</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adults who look after you?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you were feeling sad, who could you contact to cheer you up?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you failed or messed up at something, who could you turn to to make you feel</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>better?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you depend on to look after you if you were feeling unwell</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you had a secret that you wanted to share with someone, who could you tell it</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you contact if you were looking to have a good time?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you turn to for help if you got into serious trouble e.g. with the</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>police?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you wanted to join a club or do an activity and you didn’t want to do it by</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yourself, who could you ask to accompany you?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you expect to stand up for you or argue your corner?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who, out of all the names</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

363
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>in the columns, tries to make you feel proud or good about yourself?</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional support</td>
<td>Practical support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you seek help from if you had a letter, a form to complete, or set of instructions and you were having problems understanding it?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who can you rely on to make sure that you look your best (i.e. ensure that you keep yourself clean and that you have suitable clothes)?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you ask for a ‘lift’ or help to get some place?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who could you seek help from if you were having problems with your family?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who, out of all the people in the columns, makes you feel loved or special?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who, out of all the people in the columns, makes you feel listened to and understood?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you had an appointment (e.g. doctors/ dentist/ job interview), who could you rely on to make sure that you got there?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you were in hospital, who would come to visit you?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>