Enabling a secondary school to develop its practice in relation to children in care (CiC) through use of the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach

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

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School of Education
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<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASBO</td>
<td>Anti-Social Behavioural Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPS</td>
<td>British Psychological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA 89/04</td>
<td>Children Act 1989/2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMHS</td>
<td>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>Cognitive Abilities Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Child/ren in Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLA</td>
<td>Child/ren Looked After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Care Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoE</td>
<td>Church of England (= Voluntary Aided School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYP A 08</td>
<td>Children and Young Persons Act 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCSF</td>
<td>Department for Children, Schools and Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfEE</td>
<td>Department for Education and Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfES</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPA 98</td>
<td>Data Protection Act 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Education Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Education Act + date e.g. 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBD</td>
<td>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDIMIS</td>
<td>Education Integrated Management Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP</td>
<td>Educational Psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EWO</td>
<td>Education Welfare Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GB</td>
<td>Governing Body of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual Education Plan (for children with SEN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSET</td>
<td>In-Service Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPA</td>
<td>Interpretative phenomenological analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KS</td>
<td>Key Stage (in National Curriculum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Local Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>Looked After Child/ren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA</td>
<td>Local Education Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRI</td>
<td>Magnetic Resonance Imaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>National Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-CiC</td>
<td>Child/ren who is/are not Looked After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQT</td>
<td>Newly Qualified Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>Pupil Attitudes to Self and School Rating Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDA</td>
<td>Performance Development Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEP</td>
<td>Personal Education Plan (for CLA/CiC/LAC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td>Pupil Referral Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAD</td>
<td>Reactive Attachment Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADIO</td>
<td>Research and Development in Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reg/s</td>
<td>Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/s</td>
<td>Section/section (in Act of Parliament/Statute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAL</td>
<td>Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEBD</td>
<td>Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCo</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEU</td>
<td>Social Exclusion Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMS</td>
<td>School Information Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIP</td>
<td>School Improvement Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEP</td>
<td>Trainee Educational Psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSH</td>
<td>Virtual School Head teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOT</td>
<td>Youth Offending Team</td>
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</table>
Abstract

Enabling a secondary school to develop its practice in relation to children in care (CiC) through use of the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach

Educational outcomes and long term outcomes for children in care (CiC) are a continuing cause for concern; research shows that care leavers as a group are likely to be among the most socially excluded young people in society (Stein, 2006). In the United Kingdom, concerns about the educational underachievement of CiC have prompted a number of major Government initiatives over the past decade (Jacklin, Robinson and Torrance, 2006). Promoting positive school experiences for CiC and developing the practice of staff in supporting this group of children is an issue of particular importance within the local authority (LA) within which I practice, as it has above average levels of CiC compared to its statistical neighbours. The team manager for CiC within the LA identified a role for research related to the experiences of CiC at secondary school level, as she recognised that there was a role for Educational Psychologists (EPs) in helping schools to develop their practice at a whole-school level in order to support these pupils’ needs. With this in mind, the purpose of my research was to carry out collaborative action research with key staff at a secondary school in order to enable the school to develop its practice in relation to CiC. The Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003), was the framework chosen for the action research. The application of the approach within the school will be described as well as the findings. The concept of resilience is important to this research. This was the preferred approach of the secondary school and it appeals as a framework to supporting the school experiences for CiC because resiliency approaches are broad, they can be easily individualised and are flexible. This flexibility is important; a resiliency approach allows for the central focus to be on supporting a CiC of secondary school age move through adolescence towards adulthood. Another appeal of a resiliency approach is that it acknowledges strengths and promotes a sense of hope in individuals. Further, school has been identified as a source of resilience for vulnerable children (Gilligan, 1998; 2000). The research will focus on four key aspects of resilience, which have been highlighted by researchers (for example, Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999) as of value in supporting CiC to succeed at school. The research will end with reflection on how the RADIO approach might contribute to the work of EPs at LA and whole school levels.
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of the participants for their involvement in this piece of research.

Thank you to Caroline Bond, Margaret Smith and Kevin Woods for their guidance and support throughout the planning and writing of the thesis.

Finally, thank you to my friends and family, especially to my mum and dad, for their patience and encouragement over the duration of the course and beyond! Thank you also to Paul for his kindness and support.
Terminology

The term ‘children in care’ (CiC) is used in this research to mean all children and young people who are looked after by a local authority in accordance with the 1989 Children Act in England and Wales. The term CiC will be used as this is used in the local authority (LA) where I am employed. The LA has chosen to use the term ‘children in care’ as the Government’s Green Paper ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ (2007; HM Government) indicates that children who have had experiences of the care system prefer this term. Other terms, however, may be used to describe these children; for example, ‘looked after children’ (DfES, 2005b/b). The term ‘looked after’ stems from the 1989 Children Act and refers to those children who prior to the Act were referred to as being ‘in care’ (Sinclair and Grimshaw, 1995). Under the 1989 Children Act, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. The children fall into four main groups:

Children who are accommodated under a voluntary agreement with their parents (Section 20)

Children who are the subject of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order (Section 38)

Children who are the subject of emergency orders for their protection (Sections 44 and 46)

Children who are compulsorily accommodated. This includes children remanded to the local authority or subject to a criminal justice supervision order with a residence requirement (Section 21)

According to latest published figures, at 31.03.08, there were 59,500 CiC in England; a 1% decrease on the previous year (DCSF, 2008a).
Chapter 1: Introduction

Although published research on the education of children in care (CiC) is not large and was almost non-existent before 1987 (Jackson, 2001), the evidence collected prior to this time (for example, Lambert, Essen and Head, 1977), and indeed, after 1987, (for example, DoH, 2001, 2002, 2003; Jackson, 2001, Barnardo’s, 2006; DCSF, 2008) points to the low educational attainment of the majority of CiC. This is concerning as positive school experiences and educational outcomes have been found to be protective factors, contributing to resilience (for example, Fergusson and Lynskey, 1996; Giligan, 1997, 1998, 2000; Newman and Blackburn, 2002) and positive future outcomes (for example, Jackson and Martin, 1998; Berridge, 2002). In recent years, the Government has brought out guidance and initiatives in order to try to improve the school experiences and educational outcomes for CiC, for example, the ‘Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care’ (DfEE, 2000), ‘Supporting Looked After Learners: A practical guide for school governors’ (DfES, 2005c) and the White Paper, ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ (2007).

School experiences and educational outcomes for CiC is an issue of particular importance within the LA, in which the current study takes place, as it has above average levels of CiC compared to its statistical neighbours. The team manager for CiC within the LA identified a need for research related to the school experiences of CiC. She recognised that there was a role for me, a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), in helping schools to develop their practice at a whole-school level in order to support these pupils’ needs. With this in mind, the purpose of my research was to draw upon the knowledge base of psychological research and theory and work collaboratively with secondary school staff in order to bring about positive change in the school experiences for CiC. Specifically, in recognising the potential of schools for positive change (Dent and Cameron, 2003), I worked at an organisational level with secondary school staff in a school in the North West of England to develop their practice and support them in developing insights into how the needs of CiC could be addressed by
focusing on key areas, which from the literature, have been found to promote resilience in CiC.

The Research in Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003) was used as a framework for the research, as to my knowledge, it has not been used specifically to help to bring about positive change in the school experiences for CiC. The RADIO approach has been developed by Educational Psychologists (EPs) on the training course at the University of Birmingham and provides EPs with a framework for negotiating the precise nature of work to be carried out on behalf of research sponsors and conducting the research.

In summary, this research is intended to be of relevance to the LA as well as to the school, and it is also anticipated that it will fill a gap in the literature. As the thesis has also been about my learning, it has been written in the first person to enable me to show clearly my own values and to account for my practice within my values.

Chapter 2 of the thesis explores the literature in relation to CiC. Research related to educational outcomes for this group of children is considered, as well as some of the Government initiatives, guidance and legislation which have been introduced to support the needs of CiC. The role of the EP in supporting the needs of CiC through multi-agency working is discussed. The limited evidence base with regard to research about CiC is highlighted, and future directions are suggested.

The chapter also outlines attachment theory, and how an attachment theory perspective may help researchers to understand the needs of CiC from childhood through to adolescence. Nurture Group interventions are explained, which stem from attachment theory principles and are increasingly popular interventions in schools for supporting children’s social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Although research suggests that Nurture Groups can be an effective intervention in primary schools (Binnie and Allen, 2008; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Gerrard, 2005), the growth of Nurture Groups in secondary schools is more recent (Colley, 2009) so the impact of them is less well evaluated. However, for young people of secondary school age, issues arising during adolescence, which are also considered in this chapter, may mean that
an attachment theory perspective is too narrow. Therefore I conclude that a ‘one-size fits all’ approach may fail to address particular issues which are unique to each CiC.

In response to this conclusion, I present the argument that following a resiliency based framework is a more appropriate approach to supporting the needs of CiC. Research and literature about resilience theory as a basis for intervention for CiC is considered and critically evaluated (for example, the research by Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999).

Then, from the literature, I identify four main factors associated with promoting resiliency and which the literature suggests can initiate and bring about positive change in school experiences for CiC.

The chapter ends with a consideration of the role of the EP at organisational level in promoting change for vulnerable children and an overall summary of the literature review.

The methodology and rationale for this research is presented in Chapter 3. As action research was carried out, the methodology was not pre-planned; it emerged through the inquiry. Action research was chosen because it promotes change at an individual and at an organisational level (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003; Robson, 2002) and the aim of the research was to work with staff at a secondary school to enable them to develop their practice in relation to CiC. Underpinning methodological, epistemological and ontological assumptions of action research are outlined in the chapter. I explain why I facilitated the action research from a position of relativism. I also share my values and commitments which underpin my life and work, as through the research I endeavoured to live through my values.

A brief history of action research is shared in Chapter 3, as well as key elements of some of the models of action research. The models are critically evaluated. I provide justification as to why I chose to carry out the action research using the RADIO approach (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003) and I present an outline of its framework. I explain why I have followed the conditions set out by McNiff and
Whitehead (2006, pp. 72-75) regarding how and why a person should evaluate their work.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the research through providing description of the processes I went through, in collaboration with others, at each of the twelve stages of the RADIO approach.

Chapter 5 begins with an overview of the research. I share my personal reflections on the action research process, before discussing the research findings. Following this, each research question is addressed independently. The results relating to each research question are considered, with reference to the relevant literature. The chapter concludes with overall conclusions from the research and possible future directions.
Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1: Introductory comments

The literature review has been conducted to inform the aim of the study, which is to examine how collaborative working in a secondary school using the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003) may enable a school to develop its practice in relation to CiC. I have used the following key terms in my literature search, as well as other related terms: children in care (CiC)/children looked after (CLA)/looked after children (LAC), resiliency, attachment, Educational Psychologists and multi-agency working. Google Scholar (a search engine), and PsychInfo (a database), have been searched using the above listed terms. As well as this, Government department websites have been searched for documents and policies which relate to the focus of this research.

2.2: Educational outcomes for CiC

As Martin and Jackson (2002) state, the volume of published research on the education of CiC is not large and was almost non-existent before 1987 (Jackson, 2001). Indeed, a literature study carried out in 1983 by Jackson found that at that time there had been no book published in Britain or in the United States on the subject and there was no more of than a brief mention of it in standard welfare texts (Jackson, 1987). However, the evidence that was available prior to this time, and indeed, the evidence collected in subsequent years points to the low educational attainment of the majority of CiC; for example Lambert, Essen and Head, 1977; Fletcher-Campbell, 1997; Jackson, 2001.

Indeed, it was not until the Government were preparing for the publication of ‘Education of children and young people in public care’ (DfEE, 2000a) that national statistics about the educational outcomes of young people in public care in the United Kingdom were first collected and reported (DfEE, 2000a, p. 1). Research collected in 1995 and published in the report, revealed that 75% of care leavers were leaving
formal education with no qualifications, and between 12% and 19% were going on to formal education, compared with 68% of the general population (Biehal, Clayden, Stein and Wade, 1995). More recent research offers similar discrepancies between outcomes for CiC and their peers. For example, the Department of Health’s ‘Outcome indicators for looked after children’ (DoH, 2001, 2002, 2003) includes information about CiC’s general educational attainment. The attainment of CiC was found to be significantly lower than for other similarly aged children, with no significant differences between outcome indicator figures over that period. A longitudinal study by Evans (2000; cited in Martin and Jackson, 2002), which looked at the experiences of children entering care in a Midlands authority over a four-year period, found that CiC were thirteen times more likely to have a statement of special educational needs compared with their peers. The most recent published national data for CiC (DCSF, 2009a) puts the percentage of CiC with a statement of special educational need at 27.9%, compared with 2.7% of all children.

It is thus perhaps unsurprising that educational outcomes in terms of the proportion of CiC who reach the average levels of attainment expected of seven, eleven, fourteen and sixteen year olds, remain significantly lower than for all children (DfES, 2005b). Although figures released in 2009 show that the academic attainment of CiC is improving (DCSF, 2009a), the gap between CiC’s attainment and that of the rest of their peer group is in fact widening.

Table 2.1: Educational attainment outcome indicators for CiC at the end of 30.09.08 (DCSF, 2009a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational attainment</th>
<th>CiC</th>
<th>All pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieved Level 2 at Key Stage 1 (average for reading, writing, maths)</td>
<td>56% (57% for 2007; 58% for 2006)</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved Level 4 at Key Stage 2 (average for English, Maths, Science)</td>
<td>50% (49% for 2007; 47% for 2006)</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved Level 5 at Key Stage 3 (average for English, Maths, Science)</td>
<td>31% (30% for 2007 and 2006)</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 GCSE/GNVQ: Year 11</td>
<td>65.6% (63.7% for 2007; 63.2% for 2006)</td>
<td>98.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 5 grades A*-C GCSEs</td>
<td>13.9% (12.6% for 2007; 11.8% for 2006)</td>
<td>65.3% (62% for 2007; 59.2% for 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, statistics indicate that 69% of CiC remained in full time education at the end of Year 11 (DCSF, 2009a), compared with 80% of all pupils. Of those who left school, 16% of CiC were unemployed in September 2008, compared with 5% of all pupils.

As well as the discrepancy between the educational attainments of CiC and other pupils, there is also discrepancy linked to other factors. For example, 8.8% of CiC aged 10 or above had been cautioned or convicted for an offence between 30\textsuperscript{th} September 2007 and 30\textsuperscript{th} September 2008, compared with 4.3% of all children (DCSF, 2009a). A 2006 Barnardo’s survey of 66 young people who had been in care, compared with control group data about children who had not been looked after, found that not only did the CiC achieve fewer qualifications, but they also moved home more frequently, changed school more frequently, were more likely to have experienced bullying and were praised less for good work (Barnardo’s, 2006). Long term outcomes are also concerning; one quarter of people in prisons today have spent some time in the care system (DCSF, 2008a).

Thus, evidence from a variety of sources, including the Government, voluntary agencies and researchers has established that the education of CiC is a cause for concern. The following section will highlight the benefits of education as a protective factor. Leading on from that, the issue of why CiC underachieve will be explored.
2.3: *Education as a protective factor*

The benefits of education as a protective factor are widely known and pupils’ good educational attainments are associated with positive outcomes (for example, Rutter, 1991). Cochran (1990) identified that higher educational attainment opened up social relationships, resources and identities, which in turn reduced the risk of a person experiencing certain mental and physical illness (Cochran, 1990). It is known that around 45% of CiC are assessed to have a mental health disorder compared with around 10% of the general population (DCSF, 2007). Berridge (2002) has identified positive educational experiences and achievement at school as protective factors for individuals, contributing to resilience, better outcomes in life and psychological and emotional well-being. Further, good educational achievement was one of four protective factors against reoffending in a study of young offenders (Hoge, Andrews and Leschied, 1996).

Young people themselves seem to recognise the value of education; for example, as Jackson and Martin (1998) found from their research. Jackson and Martin (ibid.) interviewed a subgroup of 38 young people who had grown up in care, from 154 who completed a postal questionnaire designed to elicit information about the young people’s care and educational experience and their family background. The criterion for the 38 young people’s inclusion in Jackson and Martin’s (ibid.) study was set by participation in further or higher education. Participants had a mean age of 26, and were, with one exception, under the age of 35. During their semi-structured interviews, each young people was asked in depth about their family background, school experience, care experience, higher education, career and personal aspirations and achievements.

Of the 154 young people who returned the initial postal questionnaires, 49 were deemed to not have the necessary qualifications to be included in the main study. As the individuals were of a similar age range, ethnic background and care experience to the high achievers, Jackson and Martin (1998) decided that comparisons could be made with the 38 young people. Thus, the findings for the group of 38 were compared with a matched group of ex-care people who had not reached the threshold for
inclusion in the study. The matched group of young people were contacted and completed questionnaires.

A limitation of the study is that ultimately the comparison group involved 22 participants, which the authors attributed to sample members moving and being untraceable. The participants had a mean age of 25. Further, the method of recruitment may have resulted in an unrepresentative sample. Participants were contacted through letters and articles in newspapers and by an insert in a magazine ‘Who Cares?’ which is distributed through social service departments to about half of young people over 10 in the care system (Jackson and Martin, 1998). However, the backgrounds of the ‘high achievers’ were thought to conform to the care population generally (Jackson and Martin, ibid.).

Of those young people who experienced success in later life despite being looked after, experiencing educational success was viewed as a crucial factor in this (Jackson and Martin, 1998). Jackson and Martin (ibid.) particularly identified the link between early reading and educational success, which Dent and Cameron (2003) have also identified as important.

Further, low attainment can lead to long-term economic disadvantage; a study of early school leavers in Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom found that in all three countries the pupils who left school early or without qualifications had a higher risk of unemployment than those who stayed on at school (Hannan, Hovels, van den Berg and White, 1995).

2.4: What factors are responsible for CiC’s educational underachievement?

Recent studies looking into what factors are responsible for CiC’s educational underachievement are largely in agreement as to what these factors are. The studies recognise that there is no one singular factor responsible for CiC’s educational underachievement; rather there are many possible factors. The ‘Supporting Looked After Learners’ document (DfES, 2005b) suggests that reasons for underachievement
may include children falling behind through missing school; the damaging experiences that children may have undergone prior to entering care; the lack of co-ordinated educational support or inadequate facilities for study in children’s care placements and difficulties accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Difficulties accessing CAMHS is an important and concerning point, as some CiC may have mental health difficulties arising from past trauma (Martin and Jackson, 2002). Indeed, research has suggested that CiC aged between eleven and fifteen years old are four or five times more likely to have a mental health disorder than those in the general population (Meltzer, Corbin, Gatward, Goodman and Ford, 2003). If left untreated, mental health difficulties can manifest in children exhibiting challenging behaviour within school; thus putting some CiC at high risk of exclusion (Cairns, 2001). Certainly, statistics show that CiC are ten times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers (DfES, 2006a).

It could be however, that teachers particularly focus in on pupils’ ‘acting out’ behaviours at school; but ignore, underestimate or lack understanding of CiC’s underlying emotions. Certainly this would seem to be a possibility if taking into account the findings from Minnis and Devine’s (2001) research project. A group of CiC’s mental health difficulties were assessed by teachers and foster carers through the use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, Meltzer and Bailey, 1998). Minnis and Devine (2001) found that according to both foster carers and teachers, around 50% of the CiC in the study had some degree of mental health problems. It was agreed that around 50% of the children had problems with hyperactivity, 60% had conduct problems and 50% had problems with peer relations. However, there was not agreement with regard to the prevalence of emotional problems. Whereas foster carers thought that 45% of the children had emotional problems (anxiety and depression), teachers considered that 12% of the children did (a figure closer to the percentage found in the general population).

A possible explanation for this could be that some of the CiC who have anxiety and/or depression do not present with obvious external behaviours at school, which might explain why their emotional difficulties are not as noticeable to staff, compared with, for example, any difficulties they may have in interacting appropriately with their
peers or staff members within school. However, as changes within school could have the biggest impact upon the mental health and emotional well-being of pupils (Mental Health Foundation, 1999), the fact that teachers may not be fully identifying children’s needs is a cause for concern. Certainly, it has been suggested that there are positive effects in children’s learning where their emotional well-being needs have been met by their schools and that without emotional intelligence, intellectual intelligence cannot perform effectively (Weare, 2002). Another study found evidence of the positive effects of emotional intelligence in helping pupils to cope with transition from primary school to high school; that is, that having high/average levels of emotional intelligence helped pupils to cope better with transition in terms of self-worth, school attendance and behaviour, than if the pupils’ levels of emotional intelligence were low (Qualter, Whiteley, Hutchinson and Pope, 2007).

Certainly, lack of help with CiC’s emotional/mental/physical health was cited in The Social Exclusion Unit’s 2003 report as one of the barriers preventing CiC from reaching their academic potential. Other barriers highlighted were instability; separation from significant others; too much time out of school due to frequent moves and periods of absence; insufficient help with school work and insufficient encouragement at home (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003).

In contrast to focusing on a number of factors, research from the 1980s and 1990s seemed to place more emphasis on particular singular factors. Heath, Colton and Aldgate’s (1989) research suggested that family background was a large contributory factor for CiC’s poor educational performances, and Fletcher-Campbell and Hall’s research (1990) suggested that it was the system around the children that was largely responsible for this. Potential flaws within the system were also highlighted by Jackson (1994), who recognised that within the care system there were limited concerns and awareness of education and vice versa.

More recent findings from Martin and Jackson (2002) identified that 37% of their sample of high achieving young people who had spent at least a year in public care, reported concerns about the, ‘laissez-faire attitude’ shown by carers in residential homes towards school attendance (Martin and Jackson, ibid., p. 125). Martin and
Jackson’s (ibid.) research was based on an opportunistic sample of 38 young people (12 men and 26 women, with a mean age of 26 years), who had spent a year or more in residential or foster care.

The authors also noted the relatively low educational level of many residential workers in the United Kingdom compared with other parts of Europe and pointed out that some respondents linked the issue of truanting with normalization, with the respondents’ recommendation being that it should be just as unacceptable for CiC to truant as for non-CiC to truant (Martin and Jackson, 2002).

More recently, rather than focusing on problems within the system, studies have looked at how improving the system might bring about positive change with regard to CiC’s educational attainments (Jackson, 2001; DfES, 2003). Certainly, of Martin and Jackson’s sample (2002), 32% of the young people mentioned that emotional support and encouragement continued to be needed during higher education; recognition of the need for continued support from the system for CiC once they leave school.

However, research by Jacklin, Robinson and Torrance (2006) has highlighted the difficulties for professionals in identifying and tracking this group of pupils’ needs. Their research indicated that within the system there is a lack of data identifying who CiC are, particularly because of the frequent moves of school that some of the children are required to make.

In summary, there seems to be a consensus about the possible factors for CiC’s educational underachievement, with acknowledgement that there is no one singular factor responsible for CiC’s educational underachievement. However, this makes evaluations of outcomes of interventions and initiatives put in place to meet CiC’s educational needs a complex process. It can be difficult to separate out the different factors responsible for educational underachievement when attempting to measure the impact of various types of support.
2.5: Government initiatives, guidance and legislation

Concerns about the educational underachievement of CiC have prompted a number of major Government initiatives in the United Kingdom over the past decade (Jacklin, Robinson and Torrance, 2006). Some of these initiatives as well as the Government’s guidance and legislation, dating back to 1991, will be explored in this section. The roles of the designated teacher and virtual school head teacher (VSH) will also be outlined. The section will end by contemplating the impact that these initiatives, guidance and legislations may have on meeting the needs of CiC.

In 1994, the Department for Education (DfE) with the Department for Health (DoH) issued joint guidance on the education of CiC in Circular 13/94 (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), 1994). This guidance came about largely as a consequence of the findings and recommendations of the Utting Report (1991) and the Warner Report (1992) (Jacklin et al., ibid.). In 1998, the Quality Protects (DoH, 1998) programme was launched, which was a major three year improvement programme, with eleven key national objectives, for the management of children’s services. Through Quality Protects (DoH, 1998), the DoH intended to support and monitor the work of councils to deliver the improvements required, and identified a team of Regional Development Workers to work with the Department’s Social Care Regions to move the programme forward. Improving social services was a ‘central strand’ (DfEE, 2000a, p. 84) of Quality Protects (DoH, 1998), especially social services for CiC. Ultimately, the programme aimed to modernise children’s services; that is, by providing effective protection, better quality of care and improved life chances for children by providing targeted help through universal services.

In 2000, the ‘Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care’ (DfEE, 2000a) replaced Circular 13/94. As with the Quality Protects (DoH, 1998) programme, it draws attention to the importance of educational attainment as a measure of effectiveness of LA parenting. The ‘Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care’ (DfEE, 2000a) document set out the role of designated teachers for CiC. The document stated that the role of the designated teacher is to provide the link between schools and LAs, in order to help to ensure that the educational needs of CiC are met (Department for Education and Skills (DfES),
2000a). If a child is not educated in a school, then this role is carried out by the lead education professional. The document also set out other key measures, including the introduction of children in care having Personal Education Plans (PEPs) which sets out objectives in relation to academic achievement and personal and behavioural targets inside and outside of school, and LAs having a time limit of twenty days within which to secure an educational placement for any pupil in public care. In 2000, the Children Leaving Care Act was introduced, which set out responsibilities for LAs to comply with in order to support care leavers, for example, provision of support for those in full time education.

In 2002, Choice Protects was launched, which aims to improve outcomes specifically for CiC by helping LAs to promote placement stability, improve placement matching, and provide a full range of placement options to meet the needs of all CiC. The central premise of Choice Protects is that well-matched placements for CiC result in fewer placement breakdowns and that placement stability is associated with improved educational achievement and better long-term outcomes for children in other areas of their lives. Through the Choice Protects Grant, funds are made available to LAs to help them expand and strengthen their fostering services and improve the way that placement services for CiC are planned and commissioned. Key initiatives include plans to improve the status, training and support of foster carers and the setting up of a national helpline for foster carers.

The 2003 Green Paper, ‘Every Child Matters’ recognises that schools have an essential role to play in promoting all children’s and young people’s social and emotional development (DfES, 2003). As stated in Edwards and Sweeney (2007), as a result of the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda, schools can create multi-agency advice centres to offer guidance regarding financial assistance, community counselling services or governmental assistance for caregiver families of CiC. For example, Educational Psychologists (EPs) and/or social workers can lead seminars held at schools to help family members manage problems associated with new roles and to help caregiver families to build a social support system outside of school with other people who are going through similar experiences. The Government has placed emphasis on joined-up services and close links between professionals from education, social care and health,
in order to encourage each department to find ways to improve educational and long-term outcomes for CiC. This joined-up thinking is vital; international research has shown that care leavers as a group are likely to be among the most socially excluded young people in society (Stein, 2006).

The Social Exclusion Unit’s 2003 report (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003), as well as reporting barriers to CiC reaching their academic potential, also listed national and local action to be taken by the Government. The purposes behind recommendations for national Government action were to improve accountability; support the frontline services more effectively; ensure that LAs have adequate resources; improve understanding of care and attitudes towards those in care; refine the legal framework and guidance in the longer term to improve planning of placements; improve standards; prioritise CiC in current and future policy development, and use information and research in a more productive way (CORE Education, 2009). At local Government level, action highlighted was to improve planning; have more support for and listen and respond to CiC; train and support social workers and teachers, and use data on CiC to inform service improvements (CORE Education, 2009).

Schools are now inspected on the five outcomes stated in the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda: namely staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, achieving economic well-being and making a positive contribution (DfES, 2003). One of the programmes arising out of the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda is the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme (DfES, 2005a), with the aim of ensuring that all children have the same opportunities for effective learning, by developing children and young people’s wellbeing, and encouraging positive behaviour and regular attendance (Qualter, Gardner and Whiteley, 2007). Although SEAL is now widely established in the primary sector, it is currently being rolled out within the secondary sector. The guidance, ‘Statutory guidance on the duty on local authorities to promote the educational achievement of looked after children’ was published in 2005 and describes the day-to-day actions that LAs should take in order to play their role in promoting the educational achievement of CiC. These actions are expected to be carried out as part of the ‘Every Child Matters’ agenda. In order to build on the processes set out in the guidance, the Government has produced, ‘Supporting Looked After Learners: A
practical guide for school governors’ (DfES, 2005b), published in 2006, which provides guidance for governors to gain an understanding of the experiences of CiC in schools and the challenges they need to overcome if they are to succeed (DfES, 2005b). As part of a school’s self-evaluation, governing bodies need to seek evidence of action taken to achieve the outcomes.

All of the Government guidance and legislation has been introduced with the aim of ensuring that CiC have the same life chances as any other child. For example, under section 22 (3)(a) of the Children Act 1989, as amended by section 52 of the Children Act 2004, local authorities (LAs) have a duty to promote the educational achievement of the children in their care. This includes the responsibility of LAs to set statutory annual targets on the attainment of CiC in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 and the attainment of CiC at the end of Key Stage 4. The Children Act 2004 also led to the establishment of the office of the Children’s Commissioner in England with a view to promoting the voice of children in England, as well as greater accountability for Children’s Services. Arrangements for this included the setting up of Children’s Services Authorities (covering education and social services); the setting up of cross-agency databases, statutory Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards and an Integrated Inspection Framework.

As part of the Integrated Inspection Framework, joint area reviews (JARS) report on how successfully services, including education, are working together effectively to secure positive outcomes for all children, particularly vulnerable groups such as CiC. One key judgement of JARS is whether CiC are supported in achieving educationally. Examples of evidence, which are included in the Government’s ‘Statutory guidance on the duty on LAs to promote the educational achievements of looked after children under Section 52 of the Children Act 2004’ (DfES, 2005b) include CiC having an effective Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is implemented, and support given to ensure that they participate in education and achieve to their potential. LAs also have to show the action they have taken to maximise CiC’s school attendance and help them to avoid exclusion from school, making sure that educational achievement, school attendance and cultural experiences of CiC are monitored on an individual basis and collectively in reports to senior officers and elected members, and action is taken
to address the findings (DfES, 2005b). The 2006 Education and Inspections Act also has set out additional responsibilities and guidance.

In 2006, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published their Green Paper consultation, ‘Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care’ (DCSF, 2006c). In addition, four working groups were set up to investigate best practice in supporting CiC.

In June 2007, the White Paper, ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ (DCSF, 2007) was published. This developed the proposals in the Green Paper and the findings from the working groups. It outlined the Government’s plans for improving outcomes for CiC, including the pledge to introduce an annual personal educational allowance (PEAs) for all CiC at risk of not reaching the national expected levels of attainment. From April 2008, the Government has provided £500 per annum for these allowances, per identified child, with the funding based on expectation that at a national level 72% of school age CiC will benefit from a PEA. The purpose of these allowances is to help LAs to support the learning needs of CiC and to give the children access to additional learning and developmental activities (DCSF, 2008b). They are not intended to replace, duplicate or substitute the support and services already on offer for CiC. It is understood from the white paper that the systems for identifying children eligible for a personal educational allowance will vary between LAs; however, the needs of particularly vulnerable CiC should be paid attention to. These children may include children who have recently become looked after; have experienced repeated episodes of care; are placed out of authority; are in residential children’s homes; have moved schools mid-year or have experienced multiple school moves; are not in mainstream education and have additional learning needs or SEN.

Examples of the types of activities that a PEA might be used to support include; additional one-to-one tuition to support a child’s learning; out of school learning and development that will build on the child’s self-esteem and confidence; personalised, educational trips and visits that are not organised by a school or other educational provider as part of the curriculum; learning resources that the LA does not expect to be covered by fostering allowances or children’s home fees and additional support for
vocational training, which is in addition to that provided by schools or other educational establishments (DCSF, 2008b). A national bursary has also been introduced of a minimum of two thousand pounds for all CiC who go onto Higher Education.

Policies in ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ (DfES, 2007) also cover the need for earlier interventions and support for families where children are on the edge of care and proposals to strengthen LAs’ corporate parenting roles. The role of the corporate parent was initiated in 1996 by the Government, placing responsibility on LAs to safeguard vulnerable CiC and to ensure that they receive a level of support that is comparable to that which would be offered by a good parent (Norwich, Richards, Nash, Carr, Clarkson, Cyprus, Maxwell and Tunbridge, 2008). The role of corporate parent therefore places emphasis on joined-up multi-agency working (for example, social care, education and health care professionals working collaboratively) in order to address the holistic needs of children. A holistic approach to supporting CiC has been further promoted through the publication of ‘Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children’ (DCSF/DoH, 2009), which calls for the delivery of integrated working and joint commissioning based around effective partnerships, to support CiC’s physical health, sexual, emotional and mental health, wellbeing and health promotion.

With emphasis on the importance of changes being made at LA level, in 2008, ‘Care Matters: Time to Deliver for Children in Care (An Implementation Plan)’ (DCSF, 2008c) was launched, as well as ‘Action Log’. As part of the Plan, progress will be nationally monitored and regional events will be held in order to discuss implementation of policy. The ‘Care Matters: Ministerial Stocktake Report’ (DCSF, 2009b), has reviewed the proposals in ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ (DCSF, 2007) and has set out priorities for 2010. The report (DCSF, 2009b) has identified that progress has been made in terms of CiC’s placement stability and achievement of GCSE results. Further, the report has noted that more care leavers are living in good accommodation, and are in employment and education. However, the report also states that too many care leavers live in unsuitable accommodation or are unemployed; that attainment for CiC is still below their peers and that some CiC are moved more than four times a year (DCSF, ibid.).
The proposals of the ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ paper (DfES, 2007) and elements of the ‘Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care’ (DfEE, 2000) have been implemented under the 2008 Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) (HM Government, 2008). The CYPA inserts or occasionally substitutes additional sections into the Children Act 1989. The CYPA aims to improve the stability of placements and improve the educational experiences and attainments of young people in LA care or those about to leave care, through such provisions as the appointment of Independent Reviewing Officers and through giving the Office for Standards in Education for Children (Ofsted) an additional power to serve a notice on those running children's homes or residential family centres restricting their activities.

In addition, Section 20 of the CYPA set out the statutory requirement that from September 2009, every school should have a designated teacher. The role of the designated teacher also fits in with the duty of LAs to promote the educational achievement of CiC (Section 22, 3A of the Children Act 1989, inserted by Section 52 of the Children Act 2004). According to the draft regulations, in maintained schools, governing bodies must ensure that the designated teacher meets one of three following prescribed sets of qualifications and/or experience:

- Is a qualified teacher who has completed required induction and is working as a teacher at school;
- Is a head or an acting head teacher;
- Is a person who is working at school and has had responsibility for co-ordinating provision for certain registered pupils at school for at least six months ending on the date to be specified in September 2012 and the governing body is satisfied that the person is taking steps to meet the above requirements.

The designated teacher should have the following responsibilities:

- Responsibility for co-ordinating strategies to raise the attainment of the child or young person, in particular agreeing a PEP and creating opportunities for CiC to access additional resources for learning, particularly one-to-one tuition;
A central point of contact for child in care to provide the link between the child or young person’s carer, social worker, VSH and other children’s services;

Responsibility for understanding the wider needs of the child or young person.

(DCSF, 2008)

In May 2009, ‘Improving the Educational Attainment of Children in Care (Looked After Children)’ (DCSF, 2009c) was published by the DCSF. This is non-statutory guidance, which offers suggestions to the LA and schools on ways of improving the attainments of CiC. This guidance proposes that there should be certain fundamental elements of the system around CiC. The document places particular emphasis on the role of the virtual school head teacher (VSH). Three overarching elements of a VSH’s role are as follows:

- Responsibility for tracking the schooling of each CiC;
- Ensuring continuity of schooling for every CiC, even where stability of placement cannot be achieved;
- Providing additional personalised one-to-one support for every CiC, through one-to-one tuition and use of the PEA where appropriate.

The ‘Improving the Educational Attainment of Children in Care’ (DCSF, 2009c) document states that regardless of whether or not the title ‘VSH’ is used, it is ‘imperative’ (DCSF, ibid., p. 5) that every LA in the country has somebody at senior level who is accountable for the overall attainment of CiC. To date, around half of all LAs have a virtual school head teacher (VSH) (DCSF, ibid.). VSHs work closely with other professionals, including the Looked After Children Education Services (LACES) to monitor CiC’s attainment. Although at the time of writing, the full evaluation of the DCSF’s pilot of VSHs is still underway, there is some encouraging early evidence which suggests that it can lead to positive impact on attainment (DCSF, ibid.). For example, as quoted in ‘Improving the Educational Attainment of Children in Care’ (DCSF, ibid.), the first year after a virtual school was introduced in Liverpool, the number of CiC gaining one or more GCSEs rose from 33% to 54%.
The fact that in recent years, the Government has introduced initiatives and legislation, which have the potential to improve outcomes for CiC is a positive step. However, the abundance of new guidance can mean that professionals become overwhelmed, especially when they are expected to implement new practices within relatively short periods of time. Although multi-agency working is of key importance, there is a risk that guidance may create tensions between the priorities of different professionals. For example, guidance regarding improving CiC’s educational attainment may be deemed as being of high priority by a VSH, but less so by a social worker. It seems that there is a need for shared objectives and open communication in order to facilitate joined up thinking.

On a positive note, the Government’s pledge to reviewing the progress of LAs in meeting the needs of CiC, through for example, Ofsted inspections of LA practice and annual evaluations of key policies such as ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ (DCSF, 2007), sends out the strong message that they are committed to improving experiences for CiC, and that this remains a future priority.

2.6: The distinctive role of EPs in supporting the needs of CiC through multi-agency working

The report by the DfES (2006d) regarding EPs’ work in the context of developing multi-agency working and in light of the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) agenda, identified that 71% of responding EPs were involved in services to, or related to, CiC. Examples of EPs’ work in multi-disciplinary teams and examples of work specifically in relation to fostering and adoption (for example, their work in training foster carers in the development of their language skills) were reported.

More recent research has examined the nature of multi-disciplinary work carried out by EPs in England in relation to fostering and adoption (Norgate, Traill, and Osborne, 2008) and more generally in relation to CiC (Norwich, Richards, Nash, Carr, Clarkson, Cyprus, Maxwell and Tunbridge, 2008). Norgate et al.’s research (2008) indicated that EPSs seemed to have a common understanding of what they can offer in terms of
supporting CiC. Specific examples of work that EPs were undertaking matched almost identically with the work they identified as important (Norgate et al., 2008). These in order of priority were identified as follows:

- Providing support (training, group work and ongoing support) to foster carers, adoptive parents and people considering such roles;
- Working with the foster and adoption service with the view to supporting the educational needs of these children and contributing to strategic planning and policy development;
- Providing training and support to schools;
- Providing input to the LA’s fostering and adoption panels;
- Making assessments of children’s needs;
- Providing therapeutic support, particularly around issues of resilience, attachment and identity issues.

(Taken from Norgate et al., 2008, p. 99)

It is interesting that the highest priority that the EPs identified in terms of supporting CiC was the provision of support (training, group work and ongoing support) to foster carers, adoptive parents and people considering such roles, as other researchers have reported that carers recognise a need for support and advice in understanding of a distressed and distressing child’s behaviour and communications (for example, Minnis and Devine, 2001). Minnis and Devine (ibid.) found in their study that where there was good, open, close and continuing communication between social workers and carers; carers felt supported and helped in the care of their child. Conversely, when the communication was deemed to be unsatisfactory, carers, at times, felt unsupported and struggling. Carers also felt the need for more specialist input from psychologists or psychiatrists, which was not always heard or responded to (Minnis and Devine, ibid.).

The respondents from Norgate, Traill and Osborne’s study (2008) were asked to reflect on what they would do in terms of their work with CiC if funding was not an issue. One of the main responses was to promote a better understanding of the needs of CiC,
with the aim of reducing the risk of placement breakdown at home and school. As well as expressing a desire for more proactive structures for supporting CiC, feedback also suggested that the EPs felt that they could make a distinctive contribution through providing training for schools, foster carers, adoptive parents and people considering such roles; through working with other agencies such as the LA in an attempt to raise CiC’s attainment and by providing others with an insight into the social, emotional and cognitive effects of early trauma (Norgate et al., ibid.). Norgate et al. (ibid.) reflected on the concern expressed by some EPs that their role has too heavy an emphasis on assessment and SEN; with the risk being that the role, ‘...becomes a dead end from which it becomes impossible to develop a wider range of services’ (Norgate et al., ibid., p. 100). Certainly, Cameron (2006) has asserted that EPs need to use applied psychology and step away from too much involvement with schools, in order that the EPSs benefit more CiC. Although the implication is that EPs are often too involved in individual assessment work, other types of one-to-one working such as solution focused brief therapy approaches can be particularly beneficial for EPs to utilise when supporting the needs of CiC (Bradbury, 2006).

There are, however, issues surrounding the possible constraints of EPS delivery. Allocating EPs to geographical patches of schools means that continuity of support for CiC is difficult, as these children may experience a number of changes of schools (Evans, 2000). Norgate, Traill and Osborne’s (2008) study highlighted limiting factors such as service level agreements, which can make it difficult for some EPSs to move away from having schools as the principal client group, and which can result in few openings for EPs to develop fostering and adoption work (Norgate et al., 2008).

Two main reasons were given for the lack of openings; because social care colleagues were defensive about this aspect of their role, or because they were so effective that the EPS did not feel confident that they could add value (Norgate, Traill and Osborne, 2008). The first reason highlights the tensions which sometimes arise through joint multi-agency working, although this is in contrast with Norwich, Richards, Nash, Carr, Clarkson, Cyprus, Maxwell and Tunbridge’s (2008) research which found that overall, the EPs questioned reported that they did not tend to see issues in working relationships with other professionals. The second reason could be seen as reflecting
the EPs’ views that they need to be clear about what their distinctive role is. Norwich et al. (2008) found that EPs reported their distinctive contribution as regards CiC, and compared to other groups, as involving several aspects: understanding of how CiC respond to school demands and settings; having a depth of psychological theories and their applications; more general features of the EP role such as an understanding of the process of change for individuals and groups, and the use of a research based approach to problem solving. At the EPS where I am employed, specialist EPs for CiC are regularly involved on local adoption and fostering panels.

2.7: An overview of the evidence base with regard to research regarding CiC – Research limitations and future directions

In recent years there has been a gradual increase in the published literature with regard to CiC; however, overall research in this area remains limited. The lack of research can be attributed to a number of factors. Frequent changes of placement and changes in social worker, poor school attendance and CiC’s mistrust of initiatives have all been cited as possible reasons why studies involving this group of children and young people continue to present challenges to researchers (Richardson and Lelliott, 2003). It may be that as systems of recording data become more sophisticated and as LAs become increasingly accountable for the data they collect, it will become easier for researchers to obtain up-to-date information about CiC. However, there are ethical considerations around confidentiality; although researchers may be given access to general LA statistics about CiC, obtaining information about individual CiC and their contact details may be difficult, thus limiting research opportunities. Further, as Richardson and Lelliott (ibid.) point out, even if it is possible to carry out research about CiC, any problems experienced by the children or young people may have arisen from a combination of interrelated causes, making evaluations of outcomes of care difficult to measure.

Overall, sample sizes used in research studies have been relatively small. There have been very few studies looking specifically at the types and prevalence of particular mental health problems of CiC, and as far as I am aware, no longitudinal ones.
Although some retrospective studies have been carried out researching the reflections of young people who spent time in the care system (for example, Jackson and Martin, 1998; Martin and Jackson, 2002), the issue of how representative the sample sizes were, has been raised; for example, Jackson and Martin (ibid.) raised this issue about their piece of research. Jackson and Martin’s (ibid.) participants were contacted through letters and articles in newspapers and by an insert in a magazine, which is distributed to about half of young people over 10 in the care system through social service departments (Jackson and Martin, ibid.). As the authors have themselves acknowledged, it is probable that people working in, or in contact with, helping professions were over-represented in their sample. Further, as is the case with all retrospective studies, it may be that the young people’s recollection of their feelings/experiences was different to what they felt and experienced at the time. Also, as the research invited people to share their experiences, there was no accounting for those ‘high achievers’ who did not wish to share their experiences.

There is a paucity of research investigating CiC’s school experiences during the time that they attend school, even though it is known from a variety of research sources that educational outcomes for CiC are a cause for concern. There is thus a need for more exploratory research with regard to the educational and school experiences of CiC at the time that they are involved in the education system, in addition to retrospective studies. As the secondary school environment is more complex than the primary school environment due to size, number of teachers etc, I feel that there is a particular need for more research about how these factors may impact on CiC’s school experiences. For example, as noted by Jackson (1994), the smaller primary school environment means that it is likely that primary school teachers are better able to listen to and respond to the pupils as individuals, than teachers working in secondary schools are, because there are generally more pupils in secondary schools (Jackson, 1994). Furthermore, it is usually at some stage during secondary school that young people experience adolescence, a period during which emotional, behavioural, developmental and cognitive changes occur.

In primary schools, Nurture Groups have become an increasingly popular and evaluated intervention, used to support children’s social, emotional and behavioural
difficulties. This type of intervention is closely tied to attachment theory, which will be explored in the following section. As many CiC will have experienced insecure early attachments, it may therefore be assumed that Nurture Groups are an appropriate intervention for supporting their needs. However, as will be discussed, although Nurture Groups may be an appropriate intervention in supporting the needs of children; for adolescents, it is my opinion that a broader, more flexible and individualised approach is required.

2.8: An attachment theory perspective

Attachment refers to the quality of the relationships with significant others or an affectional bond, which is enduring and of substantial intensity, with either parents or peers (Ainsworth, 1989).

Attachment theory was originally developed by John Bowlby (1969/1982; 1973; 1980). Rather than focusing on the child’s individual development, it looked at the dyadic relationship between child and mother. The theory had as its central premise that the security of the early child-parent bond is reflected in the child’s interpersonal relationships across the life span. As stated by Bowlby, attachments, ‘...play a vital role...from the cradle to the grave’ (Bowlby, 1969/1982, p. 208). Thus, children’s internal working models, or cognitive and emotional expectations of self and others develop in the context of attachment relationships. Bowlby maintained that children have an innate desire for physical and emotional comfort, as a result of their survival instinct.

Through his work, Bowlby, ‘...discovered the field of ethology, with its roots in naturalistic observation and evolutionary biology’ (Kobak, 1999, p. 25). Bowlby regarded a child’s attachment behavioural system to be an evolutionary adaptive motivational-behavioural control system, with the objective of upholding safety in infancy and childhood through the child’s relationship with an attachment figure or caregiver (Bowlby, 1969/1982). Although the attachment system is always active, attachment behaviour is activated in times of ‘danger, stress and novelty’ (Crowell,
Fraley and Shaver, 1999, p. 435), with the behaviour organised around gaining and maintaining proximity to the attachment figure or caregiver.

Bowlby’s earliest work, ‘Forty four Juvenile Thieves: Their character and home life’ (1944) investigated the early home circumstances and parent-child relationships of forty-four children who had been institutionalised for stealing, and arose through Bowlby’s work in an institution for boys who were deemed to be maladjusted. Bowlby found similar sorts of deviant parent-child relationships in a comparison group of other clinic children; however, the one factor that distinguished the children who had thiefed from the control children, was evidence of prolonged separation from parents (Kobak, 1999). For many of the children, this prolonged separation arose as a result of parental illness, death, or other disruptions within their families, which resulted in the children being placed in foster care settings (Kobak, 1999). Bowlby (1944) also identified a particular subgroup of children who he diagnosed as ‘affectionless’. All of the ‘affectionless’ children had experienced separation from their mothers after six months of age, and thus after their maternal bond had begun to form.

Bowlby’s subsequent work for the World Health Organisation (WHO), on the effects of institutionalisation on young children (Bowlby, 1951), found that children deprived of serious maternal care tended to have similar mental health difficulties as the ‘affectionless’ children in his earlier research (Bowlby, 1944). Bowlby’s research suggested that institutionalised children developed into people who lacked feeling, had superficial relationships and exhibited hostile or antisocial tendencies (Kobak, 1999). Bowlby wrote a book following his research for the WHO, including the statement that for mental health a, ‘...young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship’ (Bowlby, 1953, p. 11).

In addition, between 1948 and 1952 inclusive, Bowlby and a colleague (James Robertson) documented and filmed the effects of prolonged separations on young children aged between eighteen months and four years (Robertson, 1962). These separations consisted of removals from key caregivers and placements in unfamiliar environments, either nurseries or hospitals for a week or more. Hospital practices in the United Kingdom during the 1940s and 1950s meant that parents were allowed to
visit their sick children in hospital for one hour per week (Karen, 1994). Robertson and Bowlby identified three phases that the children passed through; ‘protest’, ‘despair’ and ‘detachment’. Bowlby regarded the phase of ‘despair’ as a phase of mourning, in that a child would interpret the separation from their mother as a loss of their attachment figure (Bowlby, 1973).

Bowlby’s work has been influential in informing social changes; for example new babies are no longer separated from their mothers at birth (Geddes, 2006). Certainly, when Bowlby’s writings were published in the 1950s, they challenged many of the practices of the time. Many theories of the parent-child relationship that were current in the 1950s viewed the parent-child relationship as a secondary by-product of the infant’s more primary need for food (Kobak, 1999).

Bowlby’s theory has been refined and extended over the years by researchers such as Ainsworth and Wittig (1969). In their study, known as the ‘Strange Situation Procedure’, Ainsworth and Wittig placed each infant aged about one year old in cumulatively more stressful situations, involving a separation from their mother and the presence of stranger, in order to produce an arousal of the attachment system. It was noticed that infants explored the rooms with the most confidence when their mothers were present in the room. However, of particular interest to the researchers were the reactions of the infants when they were reunited with their mothers following a three minute separation; and indeed the behaviour displayed by the mothers. From their observations of the infant/mother dyads, the authors identified three main attachment patterns; secure, anxious/ambivalent and avoidant; with the latter two being insecure attachment styles.

Ainsworth and Wittig’s (1969) ‘Strange Situation’ demonstrated that the characteristics of a secure attachment reflected the mother’s ability to understand her infant’s distress at her absence and offer reassurance on her return (Geddes, 2006). It was noticed that the infants of a secure attachment quickly recovered their confidence in their ‘secure base’ following the arrival of their mother and returned to exploration of the room and play. The wider implication is that a child who is securely attached, will have positive expectations of how his/her parent will react in stressful situations
and of the consequences of being separated, because of the experience they have had from a sensitive and supportive carer (Bretherton and Waters, 1985).

The other two types of dyads showed insecure attachment behaviours. In these dyads, the mothers were insensitive to their children’s distress at their absences. When these mothers returned, the infants demonstrated uncertainty, and there was little evidence of the infants regaining their confidence in exploration of the room and play. The group of ‘avoidant infants’ were so named because of their tendency to avoid contact with their mothers, rather than seek this contact, when anxiety was aroused (Geddes, 2006). Main and Solomon (1986) later identified a further insecure attachment style: disorganised/disoriented.

More recently, developments in neuroscience have linked infants’ early experiences with brain development (for example, Schore, 2000; Gerhardt, 2004), with emphasis on the importance of early attachment experiences, such as the mother being sensitively attuned towards the infant and the value of early face-to-face interactions.

It certainly seems then that the contexts in which children grow up impact upon their development. Although Bowlby’s attachment theory focused on the didactic relationship between mother and child, most children select more than one attachment figure by 18 months, which may include the child’s grandparents (Howes, 1999). Poehlmann (2003) has proposed that in specific instances where grandparents take responsibility for their grandchildren, three relationship processes simultaneously occur: possible disruptions in attachments, especially in relationships involving parents; attachment relationships between grandchildren and grandparents develop and are revised; and family members’ internal working models of attachment and care-giving are challenged and shaped. Poehlmann (2003) refers to the ‘paucity’ of research focusing on relationship processes in families of grandparents raising grandchildren and identifies a need for interventionists to help grandparents understand the origins and consequences of children’s and adults’ expectations about relationships (Poehlmann, 2003, p. 158).
The following section will consider how attachment theory can offer researchers a perspective for understanding the needs of CiC, particularly in relation to school experiences.

2.9: Attachment behaviours and understanding the needs of CiC in relation to school experiences from an attachment theory perspective

Attachment theory may help researchers to understand the needs of CiC through developing understanding of the following three points: 1) the impact that children’s separation from their families has and the circumstances surrounding this; 2) children’s care experiences including placement disruption or stability; and 3) the legacy of experiences for children’s lives after care (Stein, 2006). It also offers a perspective for understanding the mediating factors which may provide a child with resilience when adverse life events are encountered.

Many CiC will not have experienced positive early experiences. Before the 1970s, most adopted children in the United Kingdom were born to single mothers (Bennett, 2009); however, recent figures suggest that 63% of children enter care as a result of abuse or neglect and 10% because of family dysfunction (DfES, 2006a). Thus, many children who come into care will not have experienced secure attachment relationships. Rees (2006) has commented,

‘For looked-after children the question is not whether, but how attachment is affected...Early attachment is particularly important and its inadequacy can create profound, wide-ranging and lifelong vulnerability’ (Rees, 2006, p. 84).

Although early attachment relationships are important, Feeney and Noller (1996) have identified that it is possible to change children’s insecure working models of attachment in the context of the formation of new, more secure relationships. However, as cautioned by Dozier, Stovall, Albus and Bates (2001), the likelihood of developing a secure attachment with a new attachment figure beyond infancy depends on a range of factors, including the child’s early care-giving experiences, the
child’s age, the caregiver’s attachment state of mind and the quality of interactions with the new attachment figure. For example, Stovall and Dozier (2000), examining the development of attachment over two months in young maltreated children placed in foster care, found that infants placed before the age of 12 months with foster parents who were judged as ‘secure’ had developed secure attachments, whereas those children placed after the age of 12 months (up to one and a half years old) later developed insecure attachments. The idea that age is related to placement quality has however been disputed more recently (Dozier et al., 2001).

On the subject of supporting CiC, Cameron (2006, p. 300) refers to the concept of ‘authentic warmth’ in terms of how CiC in residential or foster homes should be parented. Training about relevant principles such as attachment theory may give understanding to adoptive parents/carers as to why many CiC experience difficulties in forming secure attachments. Further, it may empower adoptive parents/carers, and replace any feelings of frustration towards the children with empathy. This training seems particularly pertinent when recent statistics are reflected upon. Although placement stability is one of the Government’s priorities for CiC, the number of adopted children who have been returned to care homes because their new parents feel unable to cope with them, has increased by a third in the past year (2008-2009), and doubled in the past five years (Bennett, 2009). LAs do not have to legally keep any data on adoption breakdowns; however, numbers kept by 92 out of 450 LAs in England, Scotland and Wales for the period 2008-2009 identified that 57 children were returned to care, compared with 26 children in 2004-2005 (Bennett, 2009). A spokesperson from Adoption UK, the charity which supports adoptive families, attributed the statistics to, ‘...the lack of support for adoptive families in their challenging task of being therapeutic parents for traumatised children’ (Jonathan Pearce, Adoption UK website, 2009).

Bennett (2009) reports that the charity feels that the system still places too much preoccupation on the approvals process for would-be adoptive parents, rather than placing enough emphasis on preparing would-be adoptive parents in advance and helping them afterwards.
It is important that professionals work in collaboration to address this issue. Placement breakdowns may result in an already insecurely attached child, feeling further rejected. Whether a child is securely or insecurely attached affects their perception of the world. Werner (1990) has found association between a child having a secure attachment relationship and resilience in adverse situations. There is also evidence to suggest that secure attachment in infancy is associated with school achievement at the age of seven (Eshel, Daelmans, Cabral de Mello and Martines, 2006) and higher self-esteem and fewer emotional and behavioural problems at the age of twelve. Aviles, Anderson and Davila (2006) have found that responsive, nurturing environments support social-economic development and prepare children for academic achievement. Sroufe (1983; 1986) observed in a preschool sample of children that those who had experienced secure maternal attachments, were described by teachers as more co-operative than children who were less securely attached; had more positive social interactions, were less dependent on the teacher but had more positive affect towards them and attained high scores on ego-resilience and self-esteem. There is also evidence that children who have been deprived of secure early attachment relationships are likely to require considerable support in the development of social skills (Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999). Geddes (1999) has stated that secure attachment is a factor linked to children’s more successful engagement in school in terms of social competence; curiosity; effective play and investigation; sympathy towards others and compliance with the teacher.

2.10: Attachment disorders - The vulnerability of CiC

If a child experiences patterns of neglect and violence inflicted by his/her attachment figures beginning in the first year of life, which extends over several years, then attachment disorders are likely to be the result (Brisch, 2009). Further, Steele (2006) suggests that even if the child’s experiences improve; for example, as a result of adoption, attachment disorders can continue and cause stress between adoptive parents and the child.
Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) is a formal psychiatric diagnosis defined in The Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Two types of RAD are defined: ‘emotionally withdrawn and inhibited’ and ‘indiscriminate and uninhibited’.

Table 2.2: Types of RAD and identifiable features

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<tr>
<th>Type of RAD</th>
<th>Identifiable features</th>
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<tr>
<td>Emotionally withdrawn and inhibited</td>
<td>Child seems to actively avoid close relationships, usually those associated with comfort and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiscriminate and uninhibited</td>
<td>Child makes their need for comfort and reassurance known, but can fail to discriminate in relationships. The child may therefore form inappropriate relationships</td>
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What are common for both types of RAD are the patterns of affected children or young people’s social relating, including lack of responsiveness in relationships, excessive inhibition/over-familiarity, hyper-vigilance and role reversal with carers (BAAF, 2006). Indeed, the child or young person’s relating to others can be so severe that the person’s real attachment needs can be difficult to identify.

Minnis and Devine (2001) used The Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) scale to measure attachment disorders in CiC and in a comparison group of children who were thought to be considerably more disadvantaged than the general population. They found that the CiC had significantly higher scores for attachment disorders than the other group of children. The authors also noticed a significant association between attachment disorders and sexual abuse (Minnis and Devine, 2001). As pointed out by the authors, this does not necessarily mean that sexual abuse leads to attachment
disorders; rather that children with attachment disorders might be more vulnerable to sexual abuse.

There is a clear distinction, however, between attachment classifications and a clinical diagnosis of a disorder. A child, who has, for example, avoidant patterns of attachment, does not necessarily have a disorder. What is clear; however, is that attachment styles influence how a child relates to other individuals and that, as identified through Minnis and Devine’s research (2001), CiC may be more vulnerable as a group to forming undesirable social relating.

2.11: An attachment based principle - The Nurture Group

Although there have not been widely applicable, evidence based sets of interventions based on current diagnostic categories for attachment theory, there have been developments in attachment-based interventions, which are under evaluation (British Association for Adoption and Fostering, 2006). The Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) is increasingly used in primary schools in the United Kingdom, in conjunction with a Nurture Group intervention (The Nurture Group Network). The Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, ibid.) is an emotional developmental assessment, which assesses the needs of a pupil, allowing appropriate interventions to be planned for, and can be used to chart a pupil’s progress (Geddes, 2006). A version of the Boxall Profile (Bennathan and Boxall, 1998) for use in secondary schools, has been piloted in five regions, and is due for publication in spring 2010.

Nurture Groups were originally devised by an EP, Marjorie Boxall, who set up the first groups in inner London in the 1970s (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996) in response to teachers’ increasing difficulties in educating children who were displaying emotional problems and challenging behaviour. Nurture Groups were initially a popular form of educational provision, but their popularity began to wane in the late 1970s/early 1980s, with many of the original groups being closed down (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996). However, since the late 1990s, figures from the Nurture Group Network database indicate that there has been a new commitment to Nurture Groups in the United Kingdom (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). Cooper and Whitebread (ibid.)
suggest that there are many possible explanations for the resurgence in popularity of Nurture Groups, including the publication of a book by Bennathan and Boxall, ‘Effective Intervention in primary schools: nurture groups’ (Bennathan and Boxall, 1996), and a year later, the Government citing Nurture Groups as an example of early identification and intervention for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (DFEE, 1997).

Nurture Groups are school-based interventions which offer specialist support for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Colley, 2009). They were designed with the purpose of providing pupils with, ‘...an educational bridge to permanent and full time placement in mainstream classrooms’ (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007, p. 173). There is a clear link with Bowlby’s attachment theory (1953; 1969/1982). Bennathan and Boxall (1996) drew on attachment theory in their account of the psychological characteristics and developmentally inappropriate behaviours of pupils for who would be suited to spending time within a Nurture Group. The authors acknowledge that for some children, the developmental processes associated with early attachment needs are incomplete by the time they reach school age (Cooper and Whitebread, ibid.). Thus, Nurture Groups follow many of the insights from attachment theory, such as the presence of two adults who display positive social interaction and co-operation and the children within the groups following a daily routine, which is ‘...explicit, uniform and predictable’ (Cooper and Whitehead, ibid., p. 174). Although Nurture rooms have a working area, activities in Nurture Groups are not curriculum-led but are led by the needs of the children (Geddes, 2006); so for example, there are many opportunities for children to develop social confidence and social skills through co-operative play activities. Children are encouraged to celebrate their progress, whilst acquiring new skills, ‘...which will reduce or remove barriers to success in the mainstream classroom’ (Colley, 2009, p. 292).

Nurture rooms contain many of the features of a home environment (for example, soft furnishings, kitchen area). However, rather than making attempts to copy or supersede the parent-child relationship, the intention of the Nurture Group is to produce a form of educational attachment for children (Cooper and Whitebread, 2007). It is recommended that children are taught in a group size of no less than ten pupils and no
more than twelve (Boxall, 2002). It is anticipated that children will attend the Nurture Group for regular sessions throughout the week, but will return to mainstream class as full-time students after three or four terms (Boxall, ibid.). Research investigating the effectiveness of Nurture Groups in primary schools suggests that they have a positive impact (for example, Binnie and Allen, 2008; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007; Gerrard, 2005).

Although, as stated, research suggests that Nurture Groups have a positive impact in primary schools; at the time of writing, the impact of Nurture Groups within secondary schools is less well documented. This has been attributed to the recent growth of Nurture Groups in secondary schools (Colley, 2009). Thus, the evidence base for Nurture Groups within secondary schools is currently limited to Ofsted reports, professional testimonies and small scale research projects (Colley, ibid.). Within this small evidence base, however, Nurture Groups in secondary schools have been identified as successful interventions in supporting secondary-aged pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, for example as reflected in school inspection reports by Ofsted (Ofsted, 2006; 2007). Colley (ibid.), a special educational needs advisor, asked head teachers and practitioners to reflect on the unique aspects of support on offer to secondary schools through the implementation of Nurture Groups, and as a result of this, he has made suggestions about the way that the ‘classic’ Nurture Group model might be adapted and introduced successfully to secondary school settings.

From his interviews with head teachers and practitioners, Colley (2009) noticed that there seemed to be a preference for a low key introduction of nurture into the secondary schools. He also found that staff preferred a build up of credibility based on outcomes, rather than a whole-school drive from the outset. That is, if the Nurture Group is seen to impact on how a pupil presents and engages within school, then it may be that the whole school atmosphere and classroom of the mainstream teacher is affected in a positive way as a result. Colley (ibid.) argues that a whole-school approach is usually put into practice when Nurture Groups are introduced in primary schools, arguing that this is more feasible than if the same approach were used in secondary schools, due to the generally smaller size of primary schools.
In addition, Colley (2009) states that, contrary to present guidelines, current successful Nurture Group practice in secondary schools questions whether it is necessary to have a designated room for the Nurture Group, and so because of limitations in space, schools should be allowed flexibility on this issue. The regularity and length of sessions is another issue where Colley (ibid.) feels that there is an argument for flexibility.

As secondary schools tend to have larger numbers of pupils than primary schools, the expectation is thus that the need for places available in a Nurture Group would exceed the number of places available. Nurture Groups may therefore be one unique approach amongst several on offer in secondary schools to support young people’s needs. As Colley (2009) states,

‘...secondary schools are more likely [than primary schools] to run a variety of support areas that differentiate between learning needs, behavioural needs and nurturing needs’ (p. 296).

That is not to say that Nurture Groups in secondary schools need to be solely focused on nurturing principles; Colley’s (ibid.) research shows that they deal with other issues linked to adolescence, such as healthy lifestyle choices regarding sexual behaviour and drugs. The participants interviewed in Colley’s (ibid.) research also highlighted that secondary nurture can be particularly effective in supporting young people through bereavement, loss and trauma. Although within the school population, CiC may be identified as amongst the most vulnerable of pupils with regard to having experienced these life events, there is to date no literature which has specifically focused on their participation in Nurture Groups.

It thus seems that whereas in a primary school, a Nurture Group could be regarded as a unifying intervention, this would not be the case in a secondary school. During a young person’s time at secondary school, developmental tasks take place within a more complex social environment. Whilst principles of nurture and its key features may transfer readily into the secondary context, it is likely that a young person will have individual needs arising from the social, emotional and behavioural changes which occur during adolescence, as well as from the complexity of the secondary setting. This means that although Nurture Groups have a role in supporting vulnerable
pupils of secondary school age, individualised intervention approaches which take into account a pupil’s individual needs may be necessary. As Colley (2009) comments,

‘Poor attachment may underpin many of the difficulties faced by young people requiring nurture in secondary schools but the teenage years may throw up issues around self-image and peer relationships that are not necessarily linked to Bowlby’s Attachment Theory (1969, 1973, 1980)’ (Colley, 2009, p. 299).

Indeed, Colley (2009) feels that Nurture Group training for secondary school staff may need a different emphasis compared to the training given to primary school staff.

In summary, although early research suggests that Nurture Groups in secondary schools are a beneficial intervention for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, there is a paucity of research in this area. It is possible that the publication of the secondary Boxall Profile will lead to more research being carried out in this area.

2.12: Patterns of attachment and the effects on peer group relating and functioning in adolescence

Adolescence is ‘...the transitional period between childhood and adulthood often co-occurring with puberty’ (Casey, Getz and Galvan, 2008, p. 70). As my research involved working with secondary school staff to support the needs of CiC, I have studied the literature in relation to attachment and adolescence.

It has been suggested that attachment relationships may be particularly critical during adolescence (Nelis and Rae, 2009). Buhrmester (1996) has suggested that with the onset of adolescence, peers become more important to young people and the influence of parents tends to lessen. A reason for this may be because during adolescence, young people are increasingly concerned with social standing and acceptance from peers (Baumeister and Leary, 1995) and peer relations can focus on, ‘...competing for social approval, acceptance and popularity with peers’ (Irons and Gilbert, 2005, p. 327). It has been suggested that while secure adolescents may quickly
settle into creating co-operative and supportive networks (Irons and Gilbert, 2005), insecure adolescents tend to report more interpersonal difficulties than their securely attached counterparts (Scott-Brown and Wright, 2003), and may be more anxious, submissive or wanting to dominate; possibly re-enacting early family relationship dynamics (Irons and Gilbert, 2005). This seems to be true for younger children too; Troy and Stroufe (1987) found that pre-school children with an avoidant attachment style were more likely to be bullies and children showing signs of ambivalent attachment styles were more likely to be bullying victims. Secure children by contrast have more positive relationships and are more prosocial towards their peers than insecure children (Eisenberg, 2000). Thus, there is evidence to indicate that early attachment relationships can impact on the quality of adolescents’ and younger children’s peer attachment.

There is also evidence to suggest that adolescents’ attachment relationships may affect their psychological well-being; however, as stated by Nelis and Rae (2009), there have been variations in findings as to whether it is attachment to parents or attachment to peers, which is the most important factor in predicting this. However, as attachment theory’s central premise that the security of the early child-parent bond is reflected in the child’s interpersonal relationships across the life span, and thus has been identified as a predictor of the quality of the child’s subsequent relationships (for example, Irons and Gilbert, 2005; Sroufe, 1983; 1986), I feel that attachment to parental figures is the most important factor of the two. Indeed, this has been suggested by Margolese, Markiewicz and Doyle (2005). Further, Bradford and Lyddon’s (1993) research indicated that secure parental attachment predicted less psychological distress in college students, as well as higher self-esteem and greater life satisfaction.

Early attachment relationships with parents have been identified as having important effects upon mental health (for example, Cooper, Shaver and Collins, 1998). Irons and Gilbert’s (2005) research suggests that adolescents who are securely attached function as though their social niche is safe, use more co-operative affiliative strategies, may be able to turn to significant others for support if they feel their status slipping and may be able to generate self-supportive feelings. The authors suggest that these strategies may protect them from, ‘...the psychopathologic effect’ (Irons and Gilbert, 2005, p.
336) of low social rank/status which insecure adolescents may experience. Rutter (1990) has identified insecure parental attachment as a risk factor in psychopathology, as well as a range of adjustment difficulties in adolescence.

However, some researchers have found that secure peer attachment can compensate in some ways for insecure parental attachment. For example, Laible, Carlo and Raffaelli (2000) found that adolescents who reported insecure attachment to parents, but secure attachment to peers, had lower levels of depression and anxiety. Similarly, Nelis and Rae (2009) found that secure attachment to peers and feelings of support in these relationships may shield against depression and anxiety in adolescents, and that peers, ‘...act as important attachment figures’ (Nelis and Rae, 2009, p. 446), who may fulfil functions previously fulfilled by parents. Rickwood, Deane, Wilson and Ciarrochi (2005) have suggested that there is a difference between the sexes. That is, the authors postulate that as boys go through adolescence, unlike girls, they do not compensate for a reduced reliance on the family by developing supportive peer friendships (Rickwood et al., ibid.).

Thus, it seems that as young people enter adolescence, the principles of attachment theory may not be fully applicable to them as relationships with peers, rather than adults, start to take more prominence in their lives. Therefore, an intervention that is wholly based on attachment principles may not be sufficiently flexible to meet young people’s needs.

### 2.13: Emotional, behavioural, developmental and cognitive changes during adolescence

This section will explore some of the emotional, behavioural, developmental and cognitive changes which occur during adolescence. During adolescence, the brain undergoes a critical period for maturation of brain processes, which are believed to underlie higher cognitive functions and social and emotional behaviour (Yurgelun-Todd, 2007). Indeed, adolescence has been described as, ‘...a period of considerable development at the level of behaviour, cognition and the brain’ (Blakemore and
Choudhury, 2006, p. 296). It is during adolescence that adolescents seek to clarify who they are and what their beliefs are (Boyle, 2007). Linked to the previous section, this could be why the influence of parents tends to lessen for adolescents, and why young people are increasingly concerned with social standing and acceptance from peers (Baumeister and Leary, 1995).

Within the adolescent period, physiological changes occur. The beginnings of sexual maturation are marked by puberty (Graber and Brooks-Gunn, 1998). One of the most significant changes to occur during puberty is the increase in sex hormones; that is, oestrogen in females and testosterone in males, and the emergence of secondary sexual characteristics (Spear, 2000a). However, there is little evidence to suggest that hormonal alterations are associated in any simple manner with behavioural change (Susman, Inoff-Germain, Nottelmann, Loriaux, Cutler and Chrousos, 1987; Spear, 2000a), with recent magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) studies indicating that changes in the adolescent brain are responsible for changes such as risk-taking behaviour in adolescents (for example, Spear, 2000a), as well as being responsible for the development of executive function and social cognition (for example, Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006), emotional processing and cognitive changes (Yurgelun-Todd, 2007).

The notion that the brain continues to develop after childhood is, according to Blakemore and Choudhury (2006), relatively new. Two of the brain regions which have been shown to undergo continued development during adolescence are the prefrontal cortex and the parietal cortex (Blakemore and Choudhury, ibid.). During adolescence, there is brain growth, including the formation of additional connections between nerve cells, as well as ‘pruning’ of such connections in certain neural regions (Spear, 2000a). This pruning, known as synaptic pruning, is thought to be essential for the fine-tuning of functional networks of brain tissue, leaving the remaining synaptic circuits more efficient (Blakemore and Choudhury, ibid.). Studies have indicated that in the adolescent brain, in the frontal and parietal cortices, there is a non-linear reduction in grey matter density, and at the same time, a linear increase in white matter (Blakemore and Choudhury, ibid.). The reduction of grey matter has been attributed to synaptic pruning post-puberty (Sowell, Thompson, Tessner and Toga, 2001).
These findings may explain some of the findings obtained through MRI studies. For example, prospective memory, which is the ability to hold in mind an intention to carry out an action at a time in the future (Ellis, 1996) and associated with frontal lobe activity, continues to develop during adolescence (Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006). As well as prospective memory, other goal-directed areas in which the prefrontal cortex is thought to have involvement include rule learning, working memory and spatial memory, as well as emotional processing (Spear, 2000a). Emotional processing is important in terms of adolescents’ social interactions. During adolescence, the young person becomes more proficient at reading social and emotional cues and modulating his or her affective responses (Herba and Phillips, 2004). Some of the skills mentioned previously are executive function skills, with the term ‘executive function’ referred to as the capacity that allows us to co-ordinate our thoughts and behaviour (Luria, 1966). It may be expected that executive function skills would improve during adolescence due to the changes in the frontal lobe during this period; however, Blakemore and Choudhury (ibid.) indicate that there have been few studies related to this area.

During adolescence, Lewis (1997) asserts that dopamine peaks in the prefrontal cortex. This may have implications for adolescent behaviour and psychological functioning (Spear, 2000a) because dopamine has been associated with novelty-seeking (Dellu, Piazza, Mayo, Le Moal and Simon, 1996) and thus may lead to increases in adolescents’ risk-taking behaviours.

From an evolutionary perspective, the acquisition of independence skills during adolescence, such as seeking same-age peers and an increase in risk-taking behaviours, is thought to be important in increasing success upon separation from family protection through increased chances for harmful circumstances (for example, injury) (Kelley, Schochet and Landry, 2004). In this sense, risk-taking would seem to be a functional behaviour. This has also been observed in other species, including rodents, nonhuman primates and some types of birds (Spear, 2000b). Certainly, a characteristic of adolescents’ behaviour is that it is risk-taking (Spear, 2000; Steinberg, 2004; Gardener and Steinberg, 2005), which has economic, psychological and health implications, including human misery and lost potential, as identified by Reyna and
Farley (2006). Some adolescents will engage in more risk-taking behaviours than others; which Casey, Getz and Galvan (2008) attribute to different developmental trajectories of subcortical pleasure and cortical control regions. These changes are thought to be exacerbated by individual differences in activity of reward systems. Reyna and Farley (ibid.) state that although perceived risks, and to a greater extent, the benefits of risk-behaviour, predict behavioural intentions and risk-taking behaviour, behavioural willingness is an even better predictor of susceptibility to risk-taking.

In contrast to adolescents’ risk-taking behaviour, which appears to increase in adolescence relative to childhood and adulthood, impulsivity is thought to decrease with age across childhood and adolescence (Casey, Getz and Galvan, 2008). Although as far as I am aware there are no studies which have compared the risk-taking behaviours of adolescent CiC with their peers, it is known that one quarter of people in prisons today have spent some time in the care system (DCSF, 2008a). Thus there is a possibility that CiC may be more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour than their peers.

In terms of considering the needs of adolescents’ in more general terms, it is important to look at studies which have examined differences between the behaviours of boys and girls. For example, Rickwood, Deane, Wilson and Ciarrochi (2005) have found that adolescent girls are more likely to seek any form of help than adolescent boys, whilst Ellwood’s (1996) research suggests that, in general, adolescent girls are more likely than adolescent boys to internalise certain difficulties rather than display ‘acting out’ behaviours.

As suggested by Blakemore and Choudhury (2006), implications arising from the results of brain studies, as well as from psychology, will provide insights into potential interventions in secondary schools, for example, regarding remediation programmes or anti-social behaviour. As the authors also suggest, findings over recent years in neuroscience may offer alternatives to current punitive measures used in the United Kingdom with regard to adolescents, such as Anti-Social Behavioural Orders (ASBOs). ASBOs are civil orders, which can be given against any person aged ten years or over.
who has acted in such a way deemed to cause harassment, alarm or distress to anyone, and which, if breached, become criminal offences (Blakemore and Choudhury, ibid.). Blakemore and Choudhury (ibid.) suggest that it may be worth,

‘...allocating more resources to educational and rehabilitation programmes designed to take into account the natural developmental changes in adolescent psychology’ (p. 308).

In my view, because the changes which occur during adolescence are so complex, a ‘one-size fits all’ intervention approach to support CiC or individuals with social, emotional and behavioural needs would not be appropriate. Although general approaches to addressing the difficulties of young people can be recommended, some of which will be discussed in the following section, any approach would need to be tailored to meet an individual’s needs.

2.14: The appeal of a resiliency approach

Having considered attachment theory as a framework for supporting the needs of CiC in secondary schools and having looked at possible approaches for EPs to use when working with adolescents, I will now present the argument that following a resiliency based framework is more appropriate in supporting the needs of this group of young people. I hold this view for a number of reasons, some of which have been evidenced in previous sections.

Although I acknowledge that therapeutic techniques such as those recommended by Boyle (2007), for example, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), motivational interviewing (MI) and solution focused approaches, are all worthwhile approaches to use when interviewing adolescents; at present the lack of a substantial evidence base for these techniques means that that there is limited substantial evidence for their use with CiC. Further, therapeutic work tends to involve the EP doing more direct working with individual CiC than being involved in broader organisational work with staff such as INSET or action research, which ultimately may be beneficial in developing school support systems around CiC.
With regard to an attachment theory framework, my concern is that the needs of secondary school aged CIC will be diverse; not all of the CIC will be struggling with issues relating to attachment. A CIC may be struggling with their self-identity or residual effects of being in care such as gaps in education, for example. For this reason, a purely attachment based approach is likely to be too narrow and will not address the needs of all CIC, particularly during adolescence. However, even if that concern is put aside, the evidence base for the effectiveness of Nurture Groups within secondary schools is currently very limited, so it is too early to say how effective they are in supporting young people’s social, emotional and behavioural needs. The evidence base for Nurture Groups as an intervention at primary school level is much more robust.

As young people enter adolescence, peer relationships tend to take on increasing importance, so it could be argued that attachment theory, with its main focus on relationships with adults, is not fully applicable. Resiliency appeals as a more appealing framework because resiliency approaches are broader, they can be easily individualised and are flexible. This flexibility is important; a resiliency approach allows for the central focus to be on supporting the CIC’s move through adolescence towards adulthood. Another appeal of a resiliency approach is that it acknowledges strengths and promotes a sense of hope in individuals. Attachment theory lends itself more to a within-child focus, while resilience theory allows for a broad consideration of factors which promote resilience.

The concept of resilience is of key importance to this piece of research, not only because of its appeal, as discussed above, but because it was the preferred approach of the secondary school staff I worked with. There is also evidence to suggest that taking a resilience-led approach is of value in supporting CIC to succeed at school (for example, Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999). Daniel et al. (ibid.) carried out a pilot study exploring the feasibility of implementing ideas from the concept of resilience into action. Ideas for mapping levels of current resilience were discussed as were suggestions for practice aimed at its promotion (Daniel et al., ibid.). The authors chose six domains where, in the literature, good functioning had been associated with resilience. The domains chosen were: secure base, education, friendships, talents and interests, positive values and social competencies. Five half-day workshops were held.
over five months. There was an introductory workshop, followed by three workshops which focused on each of the domains (two per session), with feedback on practice between sessions. The final workshop was a review and feedback session. Eleven field social workers participated in the project, although not all of them were able to attend all workshops. However, all participants were sent feedback from each session and asked for feedback. The social workers each had a child or young person in mind who was currently, or at risk of, being looked after away from home on a long-term basis. Participants were encouraged to discuss the project with the children and young people, but the research did not seek to measure outcomes for the children and young people.

The lack of involvement from the children and young people in making suggestions for practice has been cited by the authors as a factor in the project’s aims not being met (Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999). What is not clear from the research is the exact level of involvement of the children and young people and the specific areas in which they had involvement. It is also not known what ages the children and young people were. Positive outcomes of the study were that the participants noticed that taking part in the workshops had changed the way they looked at their cases (Daniel et al., ibid.), although it was acknowledged that there was mixed success in developing systems for mapping the areas of resilience, with the areas of positive values and social competencies being the hardest to implement at that time (Daniel et al., ibid.).

Although having a small sample of eleven social workers clearly has affected the generalisability of findings; the research is powerful in linking theory and practice. To quote the authors,

‘Resilience theory has potential as a coherent framework to encompass much of what workers and carers instinctively aim to achieve anyway and could therefore validate practice by offering a sound theoretical basis for purposeful intervention’ (Daniel et al., ibid., p. 14).

However, it could be argued that direct measurement of outcomes for children and young people would validate practice, which was not part of Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan’s (1999) research. Indeed, in all the resiliency literature which I came across in
relation to CiC, although strong arguments were put forward for resiliency as a theoretical approach, there were gaps in terms of evaluated outcomes for CiC. For example, Newman and Blackburn (2002) have raised the issue that there are far fewer validated and replicated strategies which have been found to be consistently successful in promoting resilience for children and young people than there is theoretical discussion about resilience. Newman and Blackburn (ibid.) also expressed concern about other issues related to resilience theory such as the problem that resilience can be construed differently by different individuals, and that resilience theory in execution often does not appear to be notably different to other interventions, ‘...that seek to promote positive child development’ (Newman and Blackburn, ibid., p. 9). Nonetheless, the authors refer to the ‘...significant potential’ of resilience-promoting strategies in children and young people’s services (Newman and Blackburn, ibid., p. 9).

2.15: The concept of resilience

Resilience is not a new concept. Indeed, the study of it began over three decades ago, as developmental psychopathology emerged. Scientists became interested in developing understanding of the causes and pathways leading to psychopathology. In order to do this, they turned their attention to the study of children at risk for a variety of reasons, for example, if they had parents who were neglectful or if they grew up in poverty. In particular, evidence which indicated that children of schizophrenic mothers thrived despite their high risk status was important in creating further research into resilience (for example, Garmezy, 1974), as were studies of children living in Kauai Honolulu, Hawaii (Werner, Bierman and French, 1971). Work linked to protective factors for CiC has been particularly influential in balancing out the abundance of research findings which point to the negative outcomes that CiC face. It is hoped that resilience and wellbeing of all CiC can be promoted by having a better understanding of what these factors are (Thomson, 2007). This promotion is important; it is likely that key resilience promoting factors are likely to be weakened for CiC (Martin and Jackson, 2002).
The term ‘resilience’ is used in different ways by different people (Daniel, 2003). It has been defined in terms of an outcome; that is, ‘...normal development under difficult conditions’ (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgett and Target, 1994, p. 233). It has also been described as an adaptive quality (for example, Masten, Best and Garmezy, 1990; Schofield, 2001). Schofield (2001) suggests that resilient individuals have an internal and external adaptive quality, meaning that their mental well-being will be better than what might have been predicted given the adversities that they might have experienced. Daniel (2003) gives the example of the ability of a young person, if s/he has a failure at school, to reflect internally upon it and see it as a temporary set-back and then to seek external support, for example, by asking a teacher for support with a piece of work.

Dent and Cameron (2003) regard resilience as the concept which enables some children and young people who appear to be at risk to cope with and manage difficulties and disadvantages in life, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity and to even thrive in the face of what seems to be overwhelming odds. Gilligan (1997) suggests that although it may not be possible to protect a child from adversity in their life, boosting their resilience should enhance the likelihood of a better long-term outcome. He defines resilience as,

‘...qualities which cushion a vulnerable child from the worst effects of adversity in whatever 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’ (1997, p. 12).

It is important, however, that using terms such as ‘bounce back’ does not mean that any negative experiences in a child or young person’s life are dismissed without sensitive consideration of the extent of the impact that they may have had on the person’s life. Luthar’s (1991) research indicated that some adolescents who appeared to be coping well with situations showed some signs of depression and anxiety when they were assessed. It is also important that there is recognition that resilience is a relative concept. It should therefore not be assumed that a person’s ability to cope in one situation means that they will cope in another (Rutter, 1985). For example, a
child’s adaption to a change in school does not necessarily mean that s/he would be able to cope as well with moving away from a close friend.

### 2.16: Factors that lead to resilience

In terms of what leads to the development of resilience, or indeed, the non-development of resilience; the children-at-risk literature suggests that predictors are neither simple nor one-dimensional. Looking at factors at a functional level, Rutter (1985) perceives the resilient person to have a sense of self-esteem and confidence, to possess a set of problem solving approaches and to be instilled with a sense of self-efficacy. Other researchers have looked at the complexity of associations, recognising that there is an inter-relationship between culture, neighbourhood and family in promoting resilience. For example, Fonaghy, Steele, Steele, Higgett and Target (1994) have outlined the general predictors of resilience, which can be grouped into within-child factors, within-home factors and outside-home factors. Within-child factors may include high levels of cognitive ability and social competence, being female (up to the age of puberty), an even temperament (particularly, a sense of humour) and positive self-perceptions. Within-home factors might include socio-economic status of parents/carers, education levels within the family, parental confidence in child care and parental responsibility. Outside-home factors are thought to include the influences from the neighbourhood, school aspects (especially peer influences, teacher expectations and the level of support that is available).

Certainly, research collected since the work of Fonaghy, Steele, Steele, Higgett and Target (1994), all point to there being not one particular type of factor which predicts resilience, but instead, to a range of factors. Rutter, Giller and Hagell (1998) have identified that the resilience of young people from very disadvantaged family backgrounds can be associated with a redeeming and warm relationship with at least one person in the family or secure attachment to at least one unconditionally supportive parent or parent substitute; positive school experiences; feeling able to plan and be in control; being given the chance of a ‘turning point’ such as a new opportunity; high childhood IQ scores; lower rates of temperamental risk; and having
positive peer influences. Werner and Smith (2001) presenting their findings of a longitudinal study, spanning four decades, of resilience in 700 children born in Kauai, Hawaii in 1955, identified the protective factors as opportunities in education and vocational skills; service in the armed forces; a good marriage; strong religious faith; second marriages that provided friendship and emotional support; and for some of the individuals, serious threats to life which resulted in a catalyst for change (Werner and Smith, 2001).

Interestingly, although the authors identified that most of the individuals growing up in adverse circumstances seemed to do well in adulthood, of those who had poor outcomes, the following were identified as factors: being male; having serious financial problems; being repeatedly unemployed; having low self-esteem and being in conflict with family and community; family history of alcoholism and/or mental illness (Werner and Smith, 2001). Newman and Blackburn’s (2002) report, which was an extensive review of the international literature on the promotion of resilience, identified key concepts in the promotion of resilience as strong social support networks; the presence of at least one unconditionally supportive parent or parent substitute; a committed mentor or other person from outside the family; positive school experiences; a sense of mastery and a belief that one’s own efforts can make a difference; participation in a range of extra-curricular activities that promote self-esteem; the capacity to reframe adversities so that the beneficial as well as the damaging effects are recognised; the ability – or opportunity – to ‘make a difference’ by helping others or through part time work; and not to be necessarily sheltered from challenging situations which provide opportunities to develop coping skills.

Dent and Cameron (2003) have identified the following as protective factors: secure attachment relationships; social competence; good academic ability; positive self-perceptions; family’s socio-economic status; a supportive teacher; family members having a reasonable level of education and positive factors in the wider community.

Newman and Blackburn (2002) do raise caution about implying that the actions of professionals are of more importance than those of other individuals. They noticed from their review of the literature that when children were asked what helped them to
‘succeed against the odds’, they most frequently mentioned help from members of their extended families, neighbours or informal mentors and positive peer relationships, rather than the involvement of paid professionals (Newman and Blackburn, 2002). This being so, it is thus important that when developing strategies to support children’s resilience, that consideration is given to how professional support can complement the non-professional support which is clearly valued.

However, professionals can and do have an important factor in promoting resilience and supporting individuals. In bringing together research findings from on the resilience of young people from disadvantaged family backgrounds with research studies on young people leaving care, Stein (2008) identifies the need for comprehensive services across their life courses. That is, he identifies the young people’s need for better quality care to compensate them for their damaging pre-care experiences through stability and continuity; support for them to develop a positive sense of identity and assistance to overcome educational deficits; the provision of opportunities for more gradual transition from care; and the provision of ongoing support to those young people who need it, especially those young people with mental health problems and complex needs.

It certainly seems that although it is important to look at a child’s characteristics in order to understand resilience, it is equally important to consider the child’s experiences and how those experiences are processed by the child. Looking specifically at resilience in the context of positive experiences in everyday living, including school experiences, Gilligan (1997; 1998; 2000) has identified three sources of resilience – secure base, self-esteem and self-efficacy. In his 2000 article, in which he considered some of the factors thought to promote resilience, Gilligan argued for the value of resilience as a key concept in work with young people in need. He described social and developmental factors influencing resilience; in particular, the resilience enhancing potential of school experiences and spare time activities. He stated that these two areas were chosen because they may be easily neglected and may be more susceptible to professional influence than home life (Gilligan, 2000). This latter point is appealing to me; in carrying out this research, I wanted to support LA and teaching professionals to help them make a difference to CiC, with the recognition that a school can become
an especially important protective factor if a child or young person is experiencing adversity in their home life.

The three sources of resilience identified by Gilligan (1997; 1998; 2000) can be linked to four key factors I have identified, which, from looking at the literature, it seems can initiate and bring about positive change in the school experiences for CiC. Before these factors are identified, the key roles of schools in children’s lives will be conceptualised.

2.17: The key roles of schools in children’s lives

Gilligan (1998) has conceptualised the key roles of schools in children’s lives. He asserts the importance of a school as a, ‘...potential source of vital educational and social experiences, especially for children at risk’ (Gilligan, 1998, p. 14). Gilligan’s arguments are based on seven key propositions based on his reading from the literature of the roles that schools play in the social development of their students (Gilligan, ibid.). In summary, Gilligan summarized the potential of schools as an ally for children; a guarantor of basic protection; a capacity builder; a secure base from which to explore the self and the world; an integrator into community and culture; a gateway to adult opportunities and a resource for parents and communities (Gilligan, ibid.). In his later work, in which he argued for the value of resilience as an organising concept for work with children in need, Gilligan (2000) again made reference to the importance of children having a ‘secure base’ which he defined as,

‘...a sense of belonging within supportive social networks, by attachment type relationships to reliable and responsive people, and by routines and structures in their lives’ (Gilligan, 2000, p. 39).

Certainly, if a child does not have a viable ‘secure base’ in their family or extended family, then it may be argued that school can become the child’s surrogate ‘secure base’ (Geddes, 2006). What is more, research has suggested that if a pupil feels a sense of belonging at school, this could enhance their academic performance, motivation and wellbeing (Glover, Burns, Butler and Patton, 1998).
As has been mentioned previously, school may enhance resilience. A study in New Zealand of youngsters who were experiencing social adversity, found that the youngsters who were classified as resilient more often reported themselves as enjoying school (Fergusson and Lynskey, 1996). Dent and Cameron (2003) having explored the notion of resilience, state that,

‘A deeper knowledge of vulnerability and resilience can lead school staff to acquire important insights into common and frequently unquestioned practices in education’ (Dent and Cameron, 2003, p. 15).

With recognition of this, the authors identify a role for EPs to work at a systemic level with schools to support teachers to ensure that disadvantaged or vulnerable pupils are better supported. Another study from New Zealand, looking at the experiences of women who had suffered child abuse as adolescents, found that those who had enjoyed secondary school were more likely to stay on at school for longer, avoid early pregnancies and occupy a higher socio-economic status than those who did not like school (Romans, Martin, Anderson, O’Shea and Mullen, 1995). In a British study, positive school experiences were identified as affecting positively the progress of women who had experienced adversity in childhood (Quinton and Rutter, 1988).

There are also specific findings from research which indicate that school experiences can be a protective factor for CiC; for example, as evidenced in Christoffersen’s 1996 follow-up study of adults in Denmark who were formerly in care.

2.18: The importance of being valued by teachers

Gilligan (1998) recognises the potential role that teachers have as confidants and mentors, and guarantors of a child’s welfare. Werner (1990) has identified that a favourite teacher can become, ‘...not just an instructor for academic skills, but also a confidant and positive model for personal identification’ (Werner, 1990, p. 110). In terms of the role of teacher as ‘confidant’, the importance of this has been identified through research; Triseliotis, Borland, Hill and Lambert (1995) have found that for some young people who receive support from social services, teachers are preferred
over social workers as confidants. Looking at the teacher’s role in terms of identifying a child’s needs also highlights the importance of these actions. For example, a teacher’s vigilance in noticing changes in a child’s appearance or patterns of attendance might be the trigger that leads to help for a child who is experiencing adverse home circumstances. A teacher’s role in safeguarding children is of paramount importance, with guidance available related to the statutory duty on LAs, schools and further institutions to have arrangements for carrying out their purposes with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children (for example, DfES, 2004; 2006).

When a LA receives a referral, the LA social services will conduct an investigation under Section 47 of the Children Act.

Although it is desirable for a child to develop a secure attachment to a primary caregiver; where this has not been possible, attachment relationships of a lesser significance play an important protective role for the child. Trinke and Batholomew (1997) have referred to the hierarchy of attachment relationships, whereby lesser attachment relationships take precedence where more primary ones fail to be satisfactory. There is thus a case to be argued for adults who are supporting children in school to have knowledge of attachment behaviour so that children at risk can be identified and supported (Johnson, 1992). Indeed,

‘By identifying areas of developmental need both at an emotional and experiential level, and combining this with understanding the Attachment and social issues which can affect behaviour and learning, primary schools can incorporate highly effective intervention practices with powerful implications for individual development for all pupils’ (Geddes, 2006, p. 143).

The reason that Geddes (2006) makes particular reference to primary schools is to highlight the importance of early identification and intervention, which is, ‘...likely to maximise pupil emotional well-being and resilience so essential for entry into secondary school’ (Geddes, 2006, p. 143).

Maluccio, Abamczyk and Thomlison’s (1996) research has indicated that resilience can be fostered by a positive role model in the child’s life who is willing to spend time with them, and more specifically, Segal (1981) has commented that for competent children
from disadvantaged backgrounds, the presence of a, ‘...charismatic, inspirational person’ can, ‘help a child acquire self-assurance and a vision of what can be achieved’ (Segal, 1981, p. 287). Galbo (1996) has found that relationships with teachers may help young people compensate for lack of supportive relationships with other adults in their lives. Certainly, because according to Rutter (1990), secure and harmonious love relationships as well as success in accomplishing tasks central to their interests are the two types of experience which seem most important in influencing self-esteem (Gilligan, 2000), there is a convincing argument that,

‘...even one positive relationship or experience in childhood or adulthood may do much to counter the harm of negative relationships or experiences’ (Gilligan, 2000, p. 41).

Researchers have identified the positive value for CiC of being valued by teachers (for example, Gilligan, 1998, 2000; Masten and Coatsworth, 1998). This helps children gain a positive identity of themselves. For example, having high expectations of pupils suggests that a teacher believes in the capability of the young people. This in turn may help to develop a pupil’s self-esteem and competence (Brooks, 1994). Through their daily contact with children, teachers are in a position where over time they may be able to help a child to change their view of a stressful experience (Robson, Cook and Gilliland, 1995).

However, research has indicated that CiC do not always feel supported by teachers. Indeed, Martin and Jackson’s study (2002), which examined the opinions of high-achieving young people who had spent at least a year in residential or foster care, found that 76% of the sample said that they would like to see more support from teachers to improve the opportunities for other CiC (Martin and Jackson, ibid.). With regard to how teachers could better support CiC, suggestions that the young people made included teachers adopting a more sympathetic attitude towards CiC and making time to listen to them (Martin and Jackson, ibid.). The research also recognised the importance of not stigmatising children; 45% of the sample stressed that care should be taken not to do this nor make the children feel singled out in any way.
There has been acknowledgement too, that differences between the primary and secondary school environments can have an effect on interactions between teachers and pupils. As Jackson (1994) has identified; typically, primary school teachers, who see fewer pupils than secondary school teachers in the course of a day, are better able to listen to and respond to the pupils as individuals than teachers working in secondary schools (Jackson, 1994).

Teacher confidence is crucial in supporting the needs of CiC and teachers may feel a need for training to equip them to respond more sensitively to the needs of CiC. Looking specifically at the issue of child sexual abuse, Peake (1995) found that outlining clear information and clear expectations of teachers helps to clarify roles and reduce teachers’ anxiety. Further, Goldman, Botkin, Tokunaga and Kuklinski (1997) have found that the availability of sustained, structured consultation on a group or individual basis may influence teachers’ sense of professional effectiveness and their students’ sense of competence and achievement (Goldman, Botkin, Tokunaga and Kuklinski, 1997). It thus seems that there is a role for EPs in delivering training to meet teachers’ needs in supporting CiC, as recent research has indicated (Bradbury, 2006; Thomson, 2007).

2.19: Providing CiC with a flexible and planned approach for educational support, involving other agencies

Providing children with a flexible and planned approach for educational support promotes children’s self-efficacy and is important in initiating and bringing about positive change in the educational experiences of CiC (Thomson, 2007). This approach should include other agencies involved in children’s wellbeing, for example, social and health services (for example, Gilligan, 1998). It is known that positive educational experiences and achievement at school have been identified as protective factors, contributing to resilience and better outcomes in later life (for example, Berridge, 2002; Meyer, 1999). Within any planning for CiC, the voice of the child should also be taken into account. This should not be a mere token gesture, but the child should have the opportunity to have their voice fully heard. This is likely to increase the child’s self-
efficacy i.e. his/her belief in their ability to influence events and to make a difference to life in the present and future (Rutter, 1985). Self-efficacy is closely linked to resilience. People with a strong sense of self-efficacy will try harder and be more likely to persist when faced with difficulties.

Planning should also consider pastoral care within school. Martin and Jackson’s (2002) work with high achievers who had spent at least a year in public care, found that many of the young people spoke of the importance of having at least one person, within or outside the care system, who made time for them, often acting as a mentor or role model. Although the research did not specify that the individual should be a member of school staff, giving CiC the option in school to have access to a member of staff who can meet with them regularly seemed to be desirable.

Practical considerations are important, such as offering children extra tutorial support (Menmuir, 1994; as cited in Gilligan, 2000). Over a quarter of Martin and Jackson’s (2002) sample of high achieving young people who had spent at least a year in public care, advised that one-to-one teaching should be available to those children who needed it. Further 58% of their sample of young people who had been in public care, commented on the lack of practical resources in children’s residential homes. In the course of carrying out research into the educational environment of residential units, Rees (2001) noted some of the following: that children had to buy essential stationary out of their pocket money; a boy was using an upturned drawer as a desk and the only reading items in the homes were tabloid newspapers (Rees, 2001; cited in Martin and Jackson, 2002). Foster care has been identified as providing children with ‘good’ study facilities (Martin and Jackson, 2002), so in general terms, it would seem that there is a gap that needs to be bridged between practical resources available to children in residential care and what is available to them in foster care.

Thomson (2007) questioned a sample of EPs from a local authority about their recommendations for supporting CiC’s educational needs and found that they suggested an emphasis on alternative curricula, vocational experiences and better integration of discipline procedures and pastoral care. They also wanted to see improved communications between social work and education services and greater
consideration of educational needs and liaison between schools during and after the planning placement process. Gilligan (1998) refers to the, ‘chasm’ in children’s services between schools and teachers on the one hand and the non-educational services to children on the other (Gilligan, 1998, p. 13). Similarly, Jackson (1994) has referred to the ‘deep split between education and care which runs through all our institutions and services for children’ (Jackson, 1994, p. 273). In order to address these issues, suggestions have been made, for example, training to social workers and foster carers to increase the knowledge and understanding of carers about the education system (Bradbury, 2006).

2.20: Close links between home and school

The importance of the link between parental interest and belief in the value of education has been clearly identified by research (for example, Taylor, 1991; Lucey and Walkerdine, 2000). This seems to be just as true for CiC as for non-CiC. For example, despite the lack of association between the occupational or educational level attained by birth parents and the level achieved by their offspring, Martin and Jackson (2002) found that for a proportion of their sample of high achieving young people who had been in public care, the level of interest and importance placed on the child’s education by birth parents, was a motivating factor in their drive to succeed. Weiner and Weiner’s (1990) study carried out over a period of fourteen years in Israel, followed up 268 children placed in residential institutions from infancy. What is interesting about their findings in relation to looking at the link between parental interest and belief in the value of education, is that although learning problems affected two thirds of the study group, of the minority of children who performed very well even when they remained in residential care, all of these children maintained a significant relationship with an adult, usually a parent. Further, educational problems were much less likely among children who had an emotionally involved parent. The research would suggest that CiC value parental involvement. Although the LA may take on the role of corporate parent of a child, which may involve support from teachers, head teachers, senior officers in social services, EPs, health workers, foster carers and
birth parents; Bradbury (2006) has stated that it can prove a challenge to ensure that the duties of the parenting role are fulfilled and there is effective communication between all parties. Crucially, the child’s voice should not become lost; nor should assumptions be made about the level of involvement that a child would like birth parents to have in his/her education.

2.21: CiC feeling a sense of safety, identity and belonging at school

Children feeling a sense of safety, identity and belonging at school, for example, through having set routines (Gilligan, 2000), joining after-school and lunchtime clubs (Edwards, Mumford and Serra-Roldan, 2007) receiving positive recognition (Gilligan, 2000) and socializing confidently with their peers (Martin and Jackson, 2002) can develop their resilience. Positive recognition for hobbies, outside interests, and after-school events has been found to be protective for children from non-harmonious homes (Jenkins and Smith, 1990), and also in enhancing children’s self-efficacy (Gilligan, 2000) and self-esteem (Rutter, 1990; Gilligan, 2000). Furthermore, research from Norway has found that organised leisure opportunities for children may assist in preventing behavioural problems (Borge, 1996).

Hobbies, outside interests, and after-school events are also important for ‘normalization’ purposes; that is, in encouraging CiC to, ‘...socialize confidently with their peers and to feel less awkward and inhibited about themselves’ (Martin and Jackson, 2002, p. 124), in helping them to feel a sense of identity at school (Gilligan, 1998; 2000) and in giving them an escape from their CiC identity (Aldgate, 1990). Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan’s (1999) research found that social workers’ experience found that a barrier to CiC’s participation in extra-curricular activities was their lack of self-esteem, whereby their interpretation of the question, ‘What would you like to do?’ was, ‘What are you good at?’ The authors suggest that finding out about CiC’s past interests from parents or carers, linking hobbies to family members’ hobbies and combining family contact with interests may be beneficial (Daniel et al., ibid.). They also advise that rather than putting CiC under pressure to ‘stick with’ activities
(Gilligan, ibid., p. 11), they should be encouraged to try out different ‘taster exercises’ (Gilligan, ibid., p. 11).

Positive peer relationships have been identified as a protective factor for children (Fergusson and Lynskey, 1996). It may be necessary for some children to receive social skills support as helping children to develop the scaffolding of relationships is recognised as crucial in their development, especially for those children without viable secure bases (Gilligan, 2000). Without this support, a child may be at risk of being isolated from his/her peers.

A child’s sense of secure base is developed through,

‘...a sense of belonging within supportive social networks, by attachment type relationships to reliable and responsible people and routines and structure in their lives’ (Gilligan, 2000, p. 39).

Thus, the key factors which research into resilience suggests can initiate and bring about positive change in school experiences for CiC, can be summarised as set out in Table 2.3:-

Table 2.3: Summary of factors, which can initiate and bring about positive change in school experiences for CiC

- The importance of being valued by teachers;
- Providing CiC with a flexible and planned approach for educational support, involving other agencies;
- Close links between school and home;
- CiC feeling a sense of safety, identity and belonging at school e.g. through having set routines, joining after-school and lunchtime clubs, receiving positive recognition and forming close peer relationships.
2.22: The role of the EP at organisational level in promoting change for vulnerable children

Looking specifically at the role of EPs in terms of promoting change for vulnerable children, including CiC, in schools, Dent and Cameron (2003) have identified several levels at which EPs can draw upon the knowledge base of psychological research and theory. In summary, these levels are: treating vulnerable children as a priority group; improving curriculum access for children with special educational needs; making classrooms more supportive; incorporating psychology into individual educational plans and recognising the potential of schools for positive change (Dent and Cameron, 2003). This latter level certainly promotes opportunity for EPs to work at an organisational level with schools to help staff to develop insights into how the needs of CiC can be addressed.

Within the profession of educational psychology, there is a general shift towards EPs working at an organisational level, and the LA where I am employed is keen for EPs to carry out work at this level. It is recognised that there is a role for EPs to become involved in the wider application of psychology within education; for example, by offering INSET to schools and solution-focused collaborative working based on ideas from solution-focused brief therapy (De Shazer, 1985; O’Connell and Palmer, 2003). At Government level, the DfES publication ‘Removing the barriers to achievement’ has advocated that work should be targeted at promoting inclusion and developing school practice (DfES, 2004b).

Work at an organisational level, however, can at times be difficult for EPs to negotiate with schools; for example, there can be a mismatch between what EPs feel would be more appropriate and effective ways of working and the historical or perceived assumptions of school and LAs about what EPs’ roles are (Stratford, 2000). The systems within which EPs work can also make it difficult for EPs to negotiate organisational work. For example, at the LA where I am employed, criteria are used to determine whether or not a pupil has such educational needs as would warrant special provision and EPs work to a time allocation system within schools.
Use of criteria is a contentious issue within the EP profession; whilst some may say the use of criteria allows for fairness in the distribution of resources for children and young people (Davis, 1996), others argue that that having criteria leads to excess attention on showing that children have met the criteria, rather than upon the quality of educational experiences (Boxer, Foot, Greaves and Harris, 1998). Clarke and Jenner (2006) demonstrated through their research how LA criteria can create a focus on within-child deficits. Referring to the EPS within which they worked, the authors stated that, ‘...paradigms needed to be changed to reflect a systemic approach with regard to the interactions that occurred within settings’ (Clarke and Jenner, ibid., p. 193). The EPS where Clarke and Jenner (ibid.) worked therefore developed self-organised learning as a model for consultation, reflecting the, ‘...four main self-organised learning processes of purposes, strategies, outcomes and review’ (Clarke and Jenner, ibid., p. 194). They found that the use of this model in schools allowed consultations about individual pupils to be refocused into whole school issues.

With regard to time allocation, this system can limit opportunities for EPs to work with schools at an organisational level, as time constraints often result in case work taking precedence.

However, as MacKay states,

‘The future cannot lie in the narrow functions of educational psychology in relation to special educational needs and statutory assessment’ (MacKay, 2002, p. 248).

Robert Stratford, writing in 2000, suggested that rather than relying on individual EPs to negotiate whole school work, EPSs should establish whole school work as a service priority (Stratford, 2000). He reported his view that this would be done through approaches including developing good relationships with schools; making schools aware of potential benefits and in particular, the more effective use of time and wider benefits of positive change (Stratford, ibid.). From their consultations with schools and EPSs, Binnie, Allen and Beck (2008) found that school achievement was most successfully achieved from the bottom up, with schools taking the leading role.
Within the LA in which I am employed, EPs are also involved in carrying out additional ‘sold work’ duties at schools’ requests, which may involve projects of an organisational or systemic nature (for example, delivering training regarding children’s early development to learning mentors). However, as Stratford (2000) would agree, there is a need for organisational and systemic work to permeate into everyday EP working.

It seems that it may be particularly beneficial for EPs to undertake organisational work in secondary schools. The way that secondary schools are organised in terms of distribution of responsibility and power may affect how adolescent pupils respond in different situations. Ellwood (1996) has suggested that adolescents from less stable backgrounds are more vulnerable to a lack of suitable demarcation lines in the organisation of a school. Sutoris (2000) has postulated that the complexity of secondary schools’ organisation demands some way of integrating the ‘...fragmented experiences of pupils (and staff) into a meaningful whole’ (p. 53), through active participation from members of the school system, including pupils. Sutoris (ibid.) states that this is even more necessary when there are a particularly wide range of backgrounds and abilities amongst the pupil population, and he thus calls for a, ‘...set of corporate values’ (p. 53).

As part of working at an organisational or systemic level, Dent and Cameron (2003) endorse the idea that EPs should provide psychological knowledge based perspectives to colleagues in other disciplines, in order to help them to develop a deeper understanding of pupils’ personal and social development, and their behaviour and learning. They consider that this approach can,

‘...generate appropriate interventions for improving the home and school opportunities and promote resilience against future adversity’ (Dent and Cameron, 2003, p. 16).

Certainly, EPs should aim to utilise the knowledge and understanding that they have of psychological theory to improve outcomes for children. Opportunities should be made available for EPs to share this information with other professionals, as they may not be aware of the research when knowledge of this could have positive implications for their work with children.
Indeed, one of the distinctive contributions of EPs, as identified by the ‘Report of the Working Group’ (DFEE), is for EPs to, ‘...apply psychology to promote the attainment and healthy emotional development of children and young people from 0-19 years’ (DFEE, 2000, p. 5). The DfES (2006d) article, ‘A Review of the Functions and Contribution of Educational Psychologists in England and Wales in light of ‘Every Child Matters: Change for Children’’, found evidence that in recent years, a general reduction of statutory assessment work for EPs means that they are able to focus their work activities in a way that allows them to use their psychological skills more effectively across universal, specialised and targeted service delivery levels.

What is important, however, is that EPs strike the balance of utilising the knowledge and understanding that they have of psychological theory to improve outcomes for children, without assuming the role of ‘expert’. Although the EP’s knowledge of psychology can contribute to a better understanding of how children’s needs may be supported most effectively, it is now widely agreed that for the most successful changes to occur, the adults involved in working closely with children need to feel a sense of ownership over situations; for example, Dowd and Thorne (2007) call for more systemic working based on consultation, training and research. Certainly, Gutkin and Curtis (1999) have argued that consultation is the most viable means in working with key adults in schools to address psychological difficulties experienced by children and young people. Consultation has been described as, ‘...a voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach established to aid the functioning of a system and its inter-related systems’ (Wagner, 2000, p. 11).

Different models of consultation are utilised by EPs; with Kennedy, Frederickson and Monsen (2008) describing Patsy Wagner’s (1995; 2000) model as, ‘One of the most influential UK models of consultation’ (Kennedy et al., ibid., p. 171). Kennedy et al. (ibid.) report that their exploration of EPs’ consultation practice with teachers in schools found a high degree of consistency between theory, action and practice at least in the early stages of the consultation process, and considerable consistency across EPs’ practice. From my experience of working as a TEP, consultation seems to be an effective way of identifying and clarifying consultees’ concerns and helping me to work together with consultees in solution-focused ways. Although it is difficult for
me to judge my skills in consultation, I feel that as I have progressed through the training course; my confidence and skills in using consultation have increased. Monsen and Frederickson (2002) carried out analysis of the development of TEPs’ consultant problem solving during the course of their training and found that over that time, there was a reduction in the use of closed questions and an increase in the extent that consultants shared their reasoning aloud with the consultees and sought their views (Kennedy et. al. 2008). However, it should be noted that Monsen and Frederickson (ibid.) piece of research took place when the training course for TEPs was one year in length. As the training course for TEPs is currently three years long, it would be interesting to see research documenting the development of TEPs’ skills over this longer period of time.

Simm and Ingram (2008) have highlighted a potential valuable role for EPs in engaging in, ‘...collaborative action research with teachers in order to contribute to positive outcomes in schools’ (p. 50). Simm and Ingram (ibid.) particularly identify a role for EPs in using solution-focused action research:

‘EPs are well placed to engage in this with teachers since they are able to bring a knowledge of solution-focused approaches and relevant research and research methodologies to a project’ (p. 51).

Action research has also been regarded as a valuable means of supporting the development of policies by the working group set up to advise ministers on the future role and training of Educational Psychologists in England in 2000 (DfEE, 2000b). Further, the DfES’s (2005d) self-evaluation basis for school inspection encourages action research principles. Although action research has been recognised as being more expensive and time consuming than other types of EP involvement such as INSET (Simm and Ingram, 2008), it has been regarded as more effective in enabling colleagues to reflect on their work with the support of colleagues and other professionals (Ingram and Simm, 2006).

In summary, in recent years, it has become widely recognised that as well as being involved in individual casework, EPs can also play an important role in the wider application of psychology within education. Indeed, this is something that many
researchers actively encourage (for example, MacKay, 2002). There is thus a role for EPs to undertake organisational work in schools, with the aim of empowering staff to meet children and young people’s needs.

2.23: Overall summary of literature review

Although there has been an increase in research related to CiC over the past thirty years; on the whole, research about this group of children remains limited. This is concerning when short-term and long-term outcomes for many CiC remain a concern (for example, Barnardo’s, 2006; DCSF, 2008).

The literature review began with the sharing of the overall aim of the piece of research (section 2.1). Section 2.2 of the literature review outlined some of the evidence which highlights the discrepancy between the educational attainments of CiC and other pupils, whilst section 2.3 presented evidence for education as a protective factor. Reasons for the educational underachievement of CiC were considered in section 2.4, with recognition that there are a number of reasons for their underachievement (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003; DfES, 2005b).

In section 2.5, Government initiatives, guidance and legislation in relation to supporting the needs of CiC were reflected on. Legislation introduced within the past five years includes ‘Supporting Looked After Learners: A practical guide for school governors’ (DfES, 2005b); ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ (DCSF, 2007) and ‘Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-being of Looked After Children’ (DCSF/DoH, 2009).

In section 2.6, the distinctive role of EPs in supporting the needs of CiC through multi-agency working was considered. Specific examples of EP working were identified, as reported in Norgate, Traill and Osborne’s (2008) study. In section 2.7, I reflected on the evidence base with regard to research in relation to CiC. Limitations of the research in this area, such as small sample sizes and issues regarding how representative samples are (Jackson and Martin, 1998) were raised. Barriers to carrying out research about the
needs of CiC were reflected on, such as CiC's frequent changes of placement and poor school attendance (Richardson and Lelliott, 2003).

Although an attachment theory perspective, which is set out in sections 2.8-2.12, can be helpful in helping researchers to understand the needs of CiC, it cannot be assumed that all CiC will be struggling with issues related to attachment. Further, although there is research to indicate that Nurture Groups (see section 2.11) which are an attachment-based intervention, have a positive impact on supporting the needs of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties within primary schools (Binnie and Allen, 2008; Cooper and Whitebread, 2007), there is at the present time, less well documented impact of the impact of Nurture Groups within secondary schools (Colley, 2009). It is likely, however, that an attachment theory perspective is likely to be too narrow as CiC go through adolescence, because of the associated emotional, behavioural, developmental and cognitive changes that occur during this period. Section 2.13 has outlined some of these changes, with reference to recent MRI studies (Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006; Spear, 2000a).

The appeal of resiliency approaches to supporting CiC is that resilience theory offers a less within-child and more multi-faceted and flexible approach. A resilience theory approach also fits in well with Government guidance such as 'Statutory Guidance on Promoting the Health and Well-Being of Looked After Children' (DCSF/DoH, 2009), which promotes a holistic approach to supporting the needs of CiC. Further, in recent years there has been an increase in literature which identifies the factors which can make a positive difference to CiC's school experiences and outcomes, and which focuses on protective factors, rather than on the negative outcomes of being in care (for example, research by Dent and Cameron, 2003).

In section 2.14 of this chapter I outlined the key research which suggests that a resilience approach is of value in supporting CiC within school (Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999). Varying interpretations of the term 'resilience' have been considered in section 2.15 (for example, definitions provided by Dent and Cameron, 2003; Gilligan, 1997; Schofield, 2001) as well as factors identified in the literature as leading to resilience (section 2.16) (Gilligan, 1997; 1998; 2000; Werner and Smith, 2001).
In section 2.17, I explored the key roles of schools in children's lives, because for children who do not have a viable 'secure base' in their families or extended families, schools can become their surrogate secure base (Geddes, 2006).

Following this, I identified four key factors, which from my reading of the literature on resilience, can initiate and bring about positive change in the school experiences of CiC. Some of the main literature which informed my identification of these factors included articles by Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan (1999); Gilligan (1998; 2000) and Martin and Jackson (2002). These factors are the importance of being valued by teachers (section 2.18); providing CiC with a flexible and planned approach for educational support, involving other agencies (section 2.19); close links between home and school (section 2.20) and CiC feeling a sense of safety, identity and belonging at school (section 2.21). The literature in relation to each of the four identified factors has been considered.

The penultimate section of the literature review ended with a section on the role of the EP at organisational level in promoting change for vulnerable children (section 2.22), with acknowledgement of some of the barriers to this type of working such as the systems within which EPs work. Reference was made to the literature in this area (for example, Clarke and Jenner, 2006; Simm and Ingram, 2008; Stratford, 2000).

The rationale, which is set out in the following chapter, will set out how the literature review informed the overall aim for this piece of research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1: Introduction

This chapter will begin by stating the rationale for the research and setting out the research questions. Following this, issues of methodology, epistemology and ontology will be discussed. I will share my epistemological position and my ontological values. I will explain why I chose to undertake action research and I will discuss some of the difficulties of this type of research. Following a section where I will detail the origins of action research, I will describe and then critically evaluate some of the main action research models. I will justify why I decided to use the Research and Development in Organisations (RAIO) approach (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003) as the framework for carrying out this research. I will also provide the risk analysis carried out for the research, before explaining how ethical standards were maintained throughout the research.

3.2: Rationale for research

As demonstrated through the literature review, in recent years there has been a shift in the published literature regarding CiC, with more emphasis on identifying the factors which can make a positive difference to CiC’s school experiences and outcomes and looking at protective factors, rather than on the negative outcomes of being looked after (for example, Dent and Cameron, 2003; Edwards, Mumford and Serra-Roldan, 2007; Gilligan, 1998; 2000). It is hoped that understanding the factors which have led to CiC’s successes can then be used to promote resilience and well-being for all CiC (Thomson, 2007).

It seems that the limitation of much of the research regarding CiC is that it is descriptive, rather than evaluative. There is a need for more intervention-focused approaches, such as action research, so that evaluations can be made of practices offered by schools to support these children. Indeed, research regarding school experiences for CiC is sparse. A possible reason for this might be because the early
literature on the needs of CiC was exclusively concerned with placement and relationship issues and barely mentions school or education (Jackson, 1987), and so the school experiences of CiC over the years has been overlooked. Another reason may be that until the 1990s, poor school performance and problematic behaviours were attributed more to within-child factors such as the result of neglect and abuse (for example, Heath, Colton and Aldgate, 1989), rather than being attributed to the care and education systems (for example, McParlin, 1996). However, one thing is certain; there is clearly a need to build capacity for research and training in schools. As Comfort (2004) has highlighted, current teacher training does not equip teachers to understand the care system nor manage the behaviour of CiC.

Although resilience theory is an appealing approach, there are some areas for development, which the current research aims to investigate. Although the literature on resiliency is empirically based, it includes few specific strategies to promote resilience. It seems to be heavily focused on theoretical discussion. Even where the literature has provided strategies to promote resilience (for example, Gilligan, 1998; 1999; 2000; Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999), few of the strategies have been subject to rigorous evaluation. Unless resilience theory can provide practitioners with practical steps or approaches to supporting children and young people, then its appeal is limited and, it could be argued, it does not add value as an approach.

It is therefore important that from resilience theory, practitioners are able to draw out of the literature not only the specific domains which can promote resiliency, but practical ways, linked to the domains, that this can be done. It seems that clearer links between theory and practice are needed, otherwise resiliency approaches may not be considered distinctive when compared with other theories such as attachment theory. It is hoped that the current research will generate possibilities for how resilience theory and practice may be applied in a secondary school to support the needs of CiC.

In general, there seems to be little research evidence regarding the effectiveness of EPs in supporting the needs of CiC (Jackson and McParlin, 2006). As the authors point out, some EPs have a role as consultants to children’s homes but there is no evidence as to how their intervention affects outcomes.
The school experiences of CiC is an issue of particular importance within the LA in which I work, which has above average levels of CiC compared to its statistical neighbours. The LA’s team manager for CiC expressed a need for research related to the experiences of CiC at secondary school level, as she recognised a role for me in helping schools to develop their practice at a whole-school level in supporting these pupils’ needs. The team manager was aware of research carried out in 2006 by an EP within the LA, which involved detailed analysis of the outcome indicators for CiC within the LA; however, to her knowledge, during the past decade within the LA there had been no research carried out by the EPS at an organisational level regarding CiC.

Therefore, having identified the importance of organisational and systemic working and of EPs providing psychological knowledge based perspectives to colleagues in other disciplines; the aim of this piece of research is to bridge the gap between resilience theory and practice, to enable a secondary school in the North West of England to develop its practice in relation to CiC through working at an organisational level. This will be done through 1) focusing on four key areas from the literature, which have been highlighted by researchers as improving the school experiences for CiC (as set out in table 2.3), and 2) through implementation of an action research paradigm, using a collaborative action research process referred to as RADIO (Research and Development in Organisations) (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003). Using the RADIO approach, I will work with staff at the secondary school to enable them to develop their practice in relation to CiC. The RADIO approach as a process will be discussed more fully later on in the methodology section. There will be discussions with staff about how positive change for CiC can be facilitated through key areas associated with resiliency.

An action research paradigm was chosen because it promotes change at an individual and at an organisational level (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 2003; Robson, 2002), and as far as I am aware, the RADIO approach has not been used for this specific purpose before; that is, in order to enable a secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC.
According to Robson (2002), improvement and involvement are central to action research. Robson (2002) specifies three types of improvement; the improvement of practice of some type; the improvement of the understanding of a practice by practitioners and the improvement of a situation in which the practice takes place.

The reason that the decision has been made to focus the research in a secondary school is that it has been acknowledged that the complexity of the secondary school environment can have an adverse effect on interactions between teachers and pupils, compared to interactions which take place within the primary school environment (for example, Jackson, 1994). Furthermore, research looking at pupils’ transitions from primary school has recognised that the more complex secondary school environment can impact on pupils’ experiences of school (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramn and Splittberger, 2000; Ferguson and Fraser, 1999). In addition, there has been concern that some longitudinal studies looking at the experiences of CiC (for example, Weiner and Weiner, 1990) have excluded the experiences of many children in long-term care and all secondary aged children, whose education is most likely to suffer from the care experience itself, rather than as a result of coming from a disadvantaged background (Bebbington and Miles, 1989). As is evident through Lewin’s (1946) original action research model, which will be outlined in section 3.5, and as was the case for this piece of research, action research does not often start with a research question (RQ). Instead, the starting point for this piece of action research was that a LA key stakeholder recognised a role for me in helping schools to develop their practice in relation to CiC at a whole-school level. The overall aim of the research was to enable a secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC. The RQs were identified as the research progressed. The three RQs addressed through this research are listed below:

RQ1: How can an EP enable a secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC through working at an organisational level?

RQ2: How can action research in a secondary school aimed at developing the school’s practice in relation to CiC impact on organisational working at school and LA levels?
RQ3: Can resilience theory contribute to bringing about positive change in the school experiences for CiC?

3.3: Underpinning assumptions of action research

3.3.1: Methodological assumptions of action research

Because I decided to undertake action research for this piece of research, my methodology could not be pre-planned; rather it emerged through the action research inquiry. Although I followed a particular framework for carrying out the research (the RADIO approach); rather than referring to it as a ‘method’, I feel that it is more appropriate to speak of it as a framework through which action research processes took place. The methodology therefore consists of the processes that I went through in collaboration with others, in order to support the secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC.

My methodology is relational, and so it developed through my understanding of the individuals who I worked with, who have contributed to my developing understanding of myself. This understanding, or awareness, of self, has been identified as one of the factors which is important in research processes as it impacts on practice,

‘I would argue that an awareness of self and the forces which shape the self is a prerequisite for the formulation of more effective methods of research. Knowledge of self allows researchers to understand how social forces and research conventions shape their definitions of knowledge, of inquiry, of effective educational practice’ (Kincheloe, 2003, p. 51).

As the action research is about my learning, with me at the centre of the enquiry, it will be written in the first person. However, that is not because I have worked alone; one of the key aspects of action research is that it involves working with others at all stages of the process. Thus, for example, as advised by McNiff and Whitehead (2006), all data collected has been discussed with other people involved in the action research. In short, these findings are ‘our’ findings. Although it could be argued that writing in the
first person does not give me the same level of objectivity that writing in the third person does, the action research process was about my living knowledge as I engaged with the action research process, so in this sense, writing in the third person would have felt inappropriate. Writing in the first person, I feel, has led me to create the most honest and authentic account possible. The methodology reflects my response to the circumstances in which I found myself. Winter (1998) has suggested that this is the researcher’s role.

Through my action research, I have generated my own living theory of practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). The idea of a living theory of practice is described as, ‘...the main difference between action research and traditional forms of research’ by McNiff and Whitehead (ibid., p. 18) because it raises questions about the use of theory and its origin and nature. Whereas a living theory of practice is dynamic and subject to change within a developing situation, a person supporting a traditional view of theory would regard it as a set of propositions,

‘...which are stated with sufficient generality yet precision that they explain the ‘behaviour’ of a range of phenomena and predict what would happen in the future’ (Pring, 2000, pp. 124-125).

Action research appeals to me because of its authenticity. It allows for the real life complexities of working with an organisation and does not assume that research is a linear process.

In the sharing of my action research, I am subjecting my claims to critical evaluation.

3.3.2: Epistemological assumptions of action research

Epistemology is related to our understanding of knowledge and our acquisition of it (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). Action research takes into account the unpredictability of human nature and is different to traditional types of scientific research in that it does not seek fixed outcomes. Action researchers instead aim to create knowledge through collaboration with others, and share with others the processes through which they learn. This section will outline the epistemological assumptions of action research.
and discuss some of the other forms of research and their corresponding epistemological assumptions. I will also provide justification for why I am taking a relativist position.

Ernest (1994) has identified three types of educational research: technical rational (empirical research), interpretative research and critical theoretic research. What the three forms of research have in common is that the researcher’s stance is external to the research (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). In summary, the aim of empirical research is to show cause and effect relationships usually through statistical analysis and therefore results are generalisable and replicable. The aim of interpretative research, as described by McNiff and Whitehead (ibid.) is to observe people in their natural settings and to offer descriptions and explanations about what they are doing and the aim of critical theory is to critique normative assumptions, including a person’s own normative assumptions, in order to improve thinking and action within a given situation (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). In all of these three types of research, the knower and what is known are separate to each other. Action research is different because the researcher is placed at the centre of their own enquiries (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006) and is in company with other participants in the research as well as the wider community. The researcher is thus in relation to others, leading to the sharing of power (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006).

Action research therefore does not follow the standard view of science, which derives from the philosophical positivist approach. Although the approach can be defined differently (Robson, 2002), positivists ultimately are seeking ‘...the existence of a constant relationship between two events, or, in the language of experimentation, between two variables’ (Robson, ibid., p. 21). Carr (1989) has criticised the positivist tradition by commenting,

‘...throughout its long history, the common aim of various positivist movements...has been to offer a dispensation from any obligation to engage in critical, or reflective thought’ (p. 88).

Carr (1989), at the time of writing, also expressed concern that educational theorists, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, ‘...talk, think and act in ways which
presume certain positive assumptions to be true’ (p.88). There is thus a risk that positivism reinforces the idea of a hierarchy of power, whereby those seeking to impose certain educational and social practices can do so, without engaging in reflective dialogue with others. This can promote social inequality. It is therefore a positive sign that within educational psychology, action research has been identified as having value. Indeed, the working group set up to advise ministers on the future role and training of educational psychologists in England in 2000, commented on, ‘...action research leading to innovative policy developments’ (DfEE, 2000b, p. 27).

As well as the impact that educational research from a positivist stance can have on power relationships, there is also the issue, raised by Robson (2002) that research involving people and taking place in a social real world context is different to research which may take place within the confines of a laboratory. As Robson (ibid.) has stated, ‘...in a social, real world context, ‘constant conjunction’ in a strict sense is so rare as to be virtually non-existent’ (p. 21). This, as Robson (ibid.) has suggested, may lead some to consider the appropriateness of a scientific approach for work in the social sciences.

I believe that because of the unpredictability of humans and their own free will, it is not possible to have fixed certainties regarding, ‘what will happen’. Knowledge is uncertain as the uniqueness of individuals means that situations are interpreted differently. Thus, it is through negotiation with others that we seek to find answers and create knowledge (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). Answers and knowledge are open to modification or change. In terms of action research, it can be described as,

‘... about improving knowledge about existing situations, each of which is unique to the people in the situation, so the knowledge cannot be generalised or applied, although it can be shared’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009, p. 13).

The aim of action research, therefore, is not to find out more academic knowledge about a particular subject area, but to improve thinking and practice. This is certainly how Winter (2006) perceives action research; as a process of trying to get what knowledge we have to have a positive impact on practical life. This, in my view, is one of the most appealing aspects of action research; that it aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice through the implication that both elements are a part of
each other. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) state that action research seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by placing value on the experiential basis for knowledge and emphasising the practical motive for developing a person’s understanding. Carr and Kemmis (1986) show the intertwined relationship through theory and practice through the following assertions:

‘The twin assumptions that all ‘theory’ is non-practical and all ‘practice’ is non-theoretical are...entirely misguided... ‘Theories’ are not bodies of knowledge that can be generated out of a practical vacuum and teaching is not some kind of robot-like mechanical performance that is devoid of any theoretical reflection. Both are practical undertakings whose guiding theory consists of the reflective consciousness of their respective practitioners’ (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 113).

My motivation for carrying out action research was because I believe that it is only through understanding and improving my own practice that I can enhance my professional working relationships. Indeed, McNiff and Whitehead (2009) assert that action research is carried out by researchers who want to improve their personal and social situations, and regard themselves as an agent who can bring about change. I also firmly believe that we learn through each other. Certainly, researchers in the field of action research allude to the collaborative nature of action research. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001, p. 33) place the notion of a ‘community’ as central to action research, while Eilertsen, Gustafson and Salo (2008) perceive action research to be about negotiating and building coalitions, as well as empowering individuals and giving them ownership over situations. The idea of negotiating and building coalitions highlights the importance of action research being a collaborative process; indeed, as stated by Robson (2002), synonyms for action research include, ‘participatory research’ (Park, 1993) and, ‘participatory action research’ (Selener, 1997). Proponents of action research argue that people are more likely to make better decisions and engage in more effective practices if they are active participants in the research (Robson, 2002). Thus there is epistemological necessity for collaboration when data is interpreted. This is because the more ideas that the action researcher can collect, the closer it is possible to get to the meaning of the data.
3.3.3: Action research and the micropolitics in organisations

Action researchers should be aware when working with individuals in organisations, that power relationships may affect the action research process. In this section I will consider the implications of dynamics of power in organisations, and the role of the action researcher in addressing potential issues arising from imbalances of power.

Eilertsen, Gustafson and Salo (2008) assert that, ‘...action research is political by its very nature’ (p. 295) as the action researcher becomes inevitably involved in, and thus affects, the power relationships between individuals in organisations. In this sense, the authors regard action research as a micropolitical activity. Micropolitics has been defined as, ‘...the immediate, ongoing dynamic interaction between and among individuals’ (Blase and Blase, 2002, p. 9). Micropolitics involve both positive and negative aspects of interactions, such as friendships and power. If during the action research process, negative aspects occur, such as tensions between staff, Eilertsen et al. (ibid.) assert that issues should be addressed. They suggest that public arenas should be created, in which micropolitical issues should ‘explicitly and openly’ (Eilertsen et al., ibid., p. 306) be discussed.

Within organisations, there are often power issues, as identified by Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001). Rather than being ignored, these issues should be discussed in order to create non-hierarchical relationships, which are regarded as a key aspect of the action research process (Winter and Munn-Giddings, ibid.). Winter and Munn-Giddings (ibid.) have referred to hierarchies of power and status as, ‘...inhibiting and impoverishing the creation of distribution and knowledge’ (p. 8). It has been acknowledged in the research that schools are prime examples of organisations where there are issues arising from micropolitics (Ball, 1987; Eilertsen, Gustafson and Salo, 2008).

Thus, Johnson (2004) believes that for school practice to be developed, micropolitical insight is essential. According to Somekh (1994), the action researcher himself/herself has to be aware of the possibility of themselves getting caught up in micropolitical issues that are occurring within the school and being drawn into other people’s
personal power agendas. Somekh (ibid.) feels that the action researcher should continually ask the question, ‘Are we going to allow ourselves to be used in this way?’ (Somekh, ibid., pp. 362-363). The action researcher thus has to be clear about their role from the outset of the research and be aware of tensions which may occur within the organisation because of the action researcher’s presence. For example, if an action researcher is an outsider to the organisation, s/he will not know about such issues as the everyday concerns of teachers. There is also an argument that because the process of action research is ‘inevitably controversial’ (Winter and Badley, 2007, p. 258), that outsider-led investigation will generate defensive rejection from some staff (Winter and Badley, ibid.). The school in which I worked during the action research project was one which had been identified to me by the team manager for CiC and so I had no knowledge of the school before beginning the project, and thus no prior knowledge of its micropolitics. It could be that if I had worked with the school on previous occasions, it would have been beneficial from the point of view that I would have already formed relationships with staff members and so I would have known their preferred ways of working, as well as having insight into possible power imbalances. However, the action research process did not generate defensive rejection; I feel that staff welcomed my involvement and the opportunity to work collaboratively.

In summary, action researchers have to find ways to encourage others to think for themselves. Action research is said to be, ‘...rooted in the ideas of social and intellectual freedom’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, p.48), which suggests that people are equal, they can think for themselves and make their own decisions in life. During the action research process, there should thus be no efforts made by individuals to try to coerce others into their ways of thinking, and the beliefs and ideas of all should be respected. Winters (2006) warns that if this does not happen, then collectively people will not learn, change and grow. Indeed, McNiff and Whitehead (ibid.) have commented, ‘The idea of developing human capability is core to action research’ (p. 46).
3.3.4: Action research and relativism

My epistemological position is one of relativism; that is that truth is relative. Thus, reality is characterised through participants’ eyes (Robson, 2002), and there is no one ‘truth’ (Rorty, 1979). This fits in with the views of Wittgenstein (1968) who maintained that there is no single ‘universal’ language; that knowledge is bound by the discourse within particular cultures. Relativists maintain that the researcher learns through his/her relationships with others.

Relativism is in marked contrast to positivism, whereby one reality exists, which the researcher has to discover (Robson, 2002). Relativists believe that our current knowledge is always open to question. The exact features of relativist approaches to social research can vary from one supporter to another (Robson, ibid.); as Robson (ibid.) states, at the extreme end, relativists would maintain that, ‘...there is no external reality independent of human consciousness’ (Robson, ibid., p. 22). Such an extreme view is one I do not share; indeed, it is possible to have relativist beliefs, whilst not denying that there is a possibility of an underlying reality of some sort (Robson, ibid.). However, some researchers would argue that this in itself leaves action research open to criticism (for example, Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001) because the eventual consensus shared between people through action research does not fit in well with the relativist stance that there are multiple realities.

My view is that because I took a position of relativism, I did not enter the action research process with the assumption that there would be eventual consensus in viewpoints. Although this was hoped for, the main intention was for all of the individuals involved to reflect on our practice and to take responsibility for our own ideas and actions. I recognised that through seeing ourselves in relation with others, we would develop mutually respectful relationships. My methodology was therefore inclusional, as I lived through my value of ‘inclusion’. The value of ‘inclusion’, as well as my other values, will be outlined in the following section.
3.3.5: Ontological assumptions of action research and living through my values

‘ Ontology is the study of being. Our ontologies influence how we view ourselves in our relationships with others’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, p. 23).

Action research, being a form of social science research, is concerned with interactions between people. The action researcher does not work in isolation, so it is important that an action researcher considers his/her world view and how this may affect his/her practice. Action research is described as being carried out by, ‘...people who are trying to live in the direction of the values and commitments that inspire their lives’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, p. 23). These values and commitments are decided by the individual and thus they have accountability for them. Before I started the action research process, I thought about what my values and commitments are which underpin my life and work. I feel that my values have been developed through my personal life experiences and through my professional practice, firstly during my three years as a teacher and now as a TEP in my third year of study. Through my experiences, I attempt to understand the values of other people and this in turn means that my values are constantly emerging. My values were acted on during the research; indeed action research is value laden (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). As it is through living through values that knowledge is created, I feel that there is a close connection between ontology and epistemology. This section will share my ontological values.

I have always attempted to show care and compassion towards others, with particular emphasis on showing care and compassion towards people who I perceive to be the most vulnerable. The importance of this was always reinforced to me as a youngster; at my family home, elderly relatives who lived alone often came to stay with us and the whole family would have involvement in supporting their needs. As I have younger siblings, I also took on the role of ‘protective big sister’. I feel that the values of care and compassion influenced my decision to enter helping professions. Although at the time of selecting a topic area for my thesis, I did not notice the link between choosing CiC and the values aforementioned, it is on reflection, that I consider this choice as perhaps being made as a result of my values.
I have always approached my life and work with an attitude of, ‘I should try my best; effort is more important than achievement.’ Thus, I have always placed emphasis on working hard and trying hard. I have been fortunate that from an early age, I have received gentle encouragement and support from my parents to work to the best of my ability. The values of working hard and trying hard appeal to me because they take away the sense of expectation which I feel that a value specifically linked to achievement would have.

Inclusion as a value is important to me. I do not like it when people feel excluded from situations, and I feel that it is this value which motivates me during my work as a TEP to try to ensure that the systems around children and young people are inclusive. Tied in with the value of inclusion is, in my opinion, fairness. I feel uncomfortable when I perceive situations to be unfair for individuals and it is for that reason that I strive to be fair in my practice and in my everyday life.

The people who I worked with during the action research process were in the position to encounter my values and through doing so, they validated my practice. As action research is a social process I was required to take responsibility for my own practice and learning, through being accountable for my choices. I have endeavoured through the research to live through my values.

3.4: Evaluating qualitative research

‘Evaluation is about establishing the value of something, its worth and usefulness’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, p. 69).

From a relativist perspective, ‘validity’ of the outcomes of action research, ‘...resides in the formulation of a consensus among a particular group of participating stakeholders’ (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001, p. 256). The reason that I have used quotation marks around the term ‘validity’ is because I do not feel that it is a suitable term to use for the type of research I carried out. Indeed, Guest and MacQueen (2007) suggest that because the term ‘validity’ is derived from a positivist tradition, some qualitative researchers may not consider the concept to be applicable to qualitative inquiry. As
someone who has taken a relativist position, I acknowledge that there may be multiple views of equal validity (Popay, Rogers and Williams, 1998). Evaluation is thus not a neutral process (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). Therefore because of my position, I do not speak of triangulation when I refer to my data collection methods in section 3.10.1. Triangulation attempts to address the issue of internal validity by using a mixed-methods approach to answer a research question (Barbour, 2001). It may also refer to the process of combining multiple observers, theories and data sources (Guest and MacQueen, 2007). Triangulation is intended to minimise the risk of bias, which may arise from having, ‘...single-method, single-observer and single-theory studies’ (Denzin, 1989, p. 307). Although triangulation has been recommended by various researchers to enhance validity and rigour (for example, Russell and Gregory, 2003; Sharts-Hopko, 2002), reservations from a practical point of view have been raised (for example, Barbour, 2001; Guest and MacQueen, 2007). For example, as stated by Barbour (ibid.); certain types of data collection defy direct comparison, for example, quantitative and qualitative data; interview transcripts and transcripts produced from focus group recordings. However, most pertinently from my point of view, triangulation relies on the idea of a fixed point against which other interpretations can be measured (Barbour, ibid.), and this does not fit in with a relativist perspective.

Qualitative researchers dismiss the application of traditional criteria, as used in quantitative research, to the evaluation of qualitative research. Traditional criteria may include representative samples of adequate size, reliable measures and the use of suitable statistical analysis (Yardley, 2000). However, as a realistic perspective asserts that ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’ are relative, it also follows that traditional criterion would not be appropriate to use when evaluating my piece of research. Indeed some researchers argue that for qualitative methodologies there cannot be, nor should there be, a, ‘universal code of practice’ (Yardley, ibid., p. 217) for their use (for example, Guba, 1992). Yardley (ibid.) has suggested that this is due to the diversity in the methodologies of different types of qualitative research. This may explain why Yardley (ibid.) claimed that unlike quantitative methodologies which are,

‘...maintained and regulated by a hierarchical system of recognised expertise, embodied in research institutions, funding bodies, publication outlets and
Although there is no universal criteria for the evaluation of qualitative research, some researchers have offered their own conditions (for example, Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; McNiff and Whitehead, 2006; Yardley, 2000). From the stance of constructivism, Lincoln and Guba (ibid.) have proposed the ‘trustworthiness’ criteria to parallel positivist criteria involving credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Guba and Lincoln (1989) have proposed the second criteria, ‘authenticity’, which covers the following: fairness, ontological authenticity (expands personal constructions), educative authenticity (leads to improved understanding of other people’s constructions), cataclysmic authenticity (stimulates to action) and tactical authenticity (empowers action).

The characteristics of good qualitative research as proposed by Yardley (2000) are set out below:

**Table 3.1: Characteristics of good qualitative research**

Essential qualities are shown in bold and the examples of the form that each of the qualities can take are shown in italics. The table is taken from Yardley (2000, p. 219).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sensitivity to context</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical; relevant literature; empirical data; socio-cultural setting; participants’ perspectives; ethical issues</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Commitment and rigour</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>In-depth engagement with topic; methodological competence/skill; thorough data collection; depth/breadth of analysis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Transparency and coherence

Clarity and power of description/argument; transparent methods and data presentation; fit between theory and method; reflexivity

Impact and importance

Theoretical (enriching understanding); socio-cultural; practical (for community, policy makers, health workers)

Yardley (2000) has noted that it would be feasible to evaluate participatory action research using her criteria and certainly I hope that I have achieved ‘validity’ in my piece of research through following each of her identified qualities. However, the conditions I followed in specific detail were those set out by McNiff and Whitehead (2006, pp. 72-75) regarding how and why a person should evaluate their own work. My reason for this is that McNiff and Whitehead’s (ibid.) conditions are aimed at people wanting to undertake action research, so I felt that they were the most authentic conditions to follow. I will now outline how I have endeavoured to follow the conditions.

In the results section I have endeavoured to describe what I did, why I did what I did and what I hoped to achieve. I have made links to my values through demonstrating how they emerged through the action research process. As McNiff and Whitehead (2006, p. 73) comment, ‘As you communicate your embodied values to others, you transform them into your living epistemological values of judgement.’

In section 5.2 of the discussion, I have set out my personal reflections on the action research process; in particular how I have improved my learning from answering the research questions and how I have learned from any actions which did not go as planned. In the discussion section I have also considered how and what other individuals may learn through this piece of research.
My claims to knowledge will be ‘validated’ through the following means: demonstrating how I collaborated with stakeholders; putting my work up for public scrutiny so the public can determine whether the results are credible and trustworthy; arranging for critique from my supervisor and a work colleague, and showing evidence from my practice linked to my values (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). In addition to those types of validation, I was also in regular contact with my tutor throughout the research process; we had face-to-face meetings as well as phone calls and email. During these forms of contact, my tutor became a critical friend, offering me affirmation, as well as critical feedback. The affirmation made me feel that my work was valued and it gave me confidence at each stage of the research, and the critical feedback elicited discussion which enabled me to reflect on whether changes of direction were needed. Having read through my drafts, there were occasions when my tutor gave me feedback which alerted me to the need to provide further evidence to support my claims to knowledge. A work colleague, who was also a TEP, became a critical friend, and was a great source of support to me. I gave her regular feedback as to how my research was developing and she helped to extend my thinking through use of reflective questioning.

As my critical friends gave me feedback that my claims to knowledge were ‘reasonable’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, p. 74), I have some confidence in sharing them at a wider public level. However, consistent with my relativist position, I recognise that my findings are provisional and subject to change in light of justified critical evaluation.

3.5: A brief history of action research

This section will briefly outline the origins of action research. Once this area has been covered, there will be particular focus on action research developments in the United Kingdom, as the research took place at a secondary school in this country.

It is generally accepted that action research originated with the work of John Collier in the 1930s, subsequently followed by Kurt Lewin’s work in the 1940s (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, 2009; Robson, 2002; Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001). John Collier was the civil servant responsible for the United States of America’s government policy
on Native Americans between 1933 and 1945 (Winter and Munn-Giddings, ibid.). Through the use of action research, Collier and his department attempted to counteract racist policies which they felt did not recognise the diversity of Native American cultures, and which had destroyed these people’s coherence and isolated them as individuals (Winter and Munn-Giddings, ibid.). Collier (1945) referred to this type of research as research which is, ‘...evoked by the needs of action... [and which] feed[s] itself into action’ (Collier, 1945, p. 300) in order that local cultures be given, ‘...status, responsibility and power’ (Collier, ibid., p. 274). Collier believed that action research must be jointly created and put into practice by administrators and community members (Winter and Munn-Giddings, ibid.).

Lewin’s early work in action research was aimed at social improvement. Lewin’s article, ‘Action research and minority problems’ (Lewin, 1946), has been referred to as, ‘...the founding text of action research’ (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001, p. 33), with Lewin often referred to as the father of action research (Kemmis, 1993). Lewin was a Jewish refugee originally from Germany who worked in the United States as a social psychologist. Through his employment, he worked with community groups to resolve social issues, including the issues facing minority groups. Lewin viewed action research as a way of learning about organisations through trying to make changes to them (Robson, 2002). Lewin (1946) researched what the effects were when people were involved in decision making with regard to how their organisations were run. He found that when people were involved in decision making, they were more motivated about their work (Lewin, 1946). There was a more lasting commitment to behaviour change in group members, than if there had been other types of involvement such as advice-giving and training (Baxter, 2000). Thus, Lewin perceived action research to be, ‘...a tool for bringing about democracy’ (Robson, 2002, p. 216). He followed a systematic methodology, based on evidence and evaluation (Waters-Adams, 2006).

In the 1950s, action research became a popular approach to use in education, particularly in the United States of America. This was because of the dissatisfaction with the technical approach to curriculum development and a feeling that only through the illuminated actions of practitioners, would it be possible to resolve educational difficulties (Waters-Adams, 2006). In America, Stephen Corey’s (1953)
book, ‘Action Research to Improve School Practices’ became influential within the teaching profession (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). During the late 1950s and during the 1960s action research became less popular, thought to be because of the focus on ‘technical excellence’ (McNiff and Whitehead, ibid., p. 37) after the launch of Sputnik and the development of new research and development models (McNiff and Whitehead, ibid.). Waters-Adams (2006) makes reference to top down research, development and dissemination being influential within the educational establishment, leading to a decline in action research.

In the 1970s, action research became influential in the United Kingdom for the first time. John Elliott, a British researcher, had his article, ‘What is action research in schools?’ (1978) published at a time when,

‘...educational research was still dominated by positivist distinctions between research and action, knowing and doing, theory and practice’ (Carr, 1989, p. 85).

These distinctions created by positivism meant that teaching and research remained separated out, with research seen as something to be carried out solely by academics (Carr, 1989). Another influential researcher in the United Kingdom was Lawrence Stenhouse, who felt that teachers should be regarded as, ‘...highly competent professionals, who should be in charge of their own practice’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, p. 37). Stenhouse viewed the curriculum as a set of processes and interactions rather than a specification of subject content (Noffke and Somekh, 2005) stating that,

‘...fruitful development in the field of curriculum and teaching depends upon evolving styles of co-operative research by teachers and using full-time researchers to support the teachers’ work’ (Stenhouse, 1975, p. 162).

Thus, his work was influential in introducing the idea of teachers as researchers.

Stenhouse’s work was developed by action researchers situated in and around the Centre for Applied Research in Education (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). Some of these researchers went on to develop their work further; for example, Stephen Kemmis and colleagues developed a base of action research in Australia (Carr and
Kemmis, 1983). Within the United Kingdom, Stenhouse’s work in terms of teachers being in charge of their own practice has been developed in two different ways by John Elliott and Jack Whitehead. Elliott (2001) developed an interpretative stance; looking at situations from an external researcher’s point of view by watching what others are doing. Whitehead (1989; 2005) developed a self study perspective; whereby the researcher is placed at the centre of his/her own enquiry, and perceives himself as sharing the same life space as others. Whitehead’s (1989) work was, ‘complemented’ (McNiff and Whitehead, ibid., p. 38) by McNiff’s work in the 1980s which presented the view of,

‘...the generative transformational nature of evolutionary processes...all living systems are in constant transformation, and each new transformation holds within itself its next potential transformation’(McNiff and Whitehead, ibid., pp. 38-39).

The following section will outline’s Kurt Lewin’s model of action research and some of the variants of his model, which have been developed by other researchers. The section will end by discussing some of the concerns researchers have raised regarding these developments.

3.6: Key elements of models of action research and critical evaluation

Kurt Lewin suggested that action research, ‘...proceeds in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action’ (Lewin, 1946, p. 38). Lewin described the initial cycle of action research as follows:

‘The first step...is to examine the idea carefully in the light of the means available. Frequently more fact-finding about the situation is required. If this first period of planning is successful, two items emerge: namely, ‘an overall plan’ of how to reach the objective and secondly, a decision in regard to the first
step of action. Usually this planning has also somewhat modified the original idea’ (Lewin, 1948, p. 205).

Lewin explained the next step as,

‘...composed of a circle of planning, executing and reconnaissance or fact finding for the purpose of evaluating the results of the second step, and preparing the third step, and for perhaps modifying again the overall plan’ (Lewin, 1948, p. 206).

These descriptions thus emphasise Lewin’s view that during action research people learn from experience and that it is an ongoing, spiral process. Indeed, as stated by Noffke and Somekh (2005), ‘...it [action research] does not come to a natural conclusion’ (p. 89). As McNiff and Whitehead (2006) suggest, even when the researcher reaches a point where things are going satisfactorily, that in itself raises new questions and so the cycle begins again. Thus action research only comes to a close because of the researcher; for example, in order for them to write up their findings.

Lewin’s view of action research as a spiral of steps remains influential, and many action researchers in the present day have developed variants of the model to help them to organise their work; for example, Elliott (1981); McKernan (1988); McNiff (1988). McNiff (ibid.) has demonstrated through her depiction of spirals upon spirals that the process of action research is not always straightforward and that it may be necessary for researchers to change their initial plans.

These developments in models of action research have raised concern. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) have suggested that McNiff’s (1988) emphasis on repeated cycles seems to imply that even a basic process needs a long time to complete, which raises the issue of sustainability in work settings. McTaggart (1996) has raised concern that researchers may mistakenly believe that following an action research spiral automatically means that action research is being carried out. He has remarked,
‘Action research is not a ‘method’ or ‘procedure’ for research, but a series of commitments to observe and problematize through practice a series of principles for conducting social enquiry’ (p. 248).

Further, reflecting on the differing forms, aims, methods and results of action research, William Carr writing in 1989, commented,

‘Action research now means different things to different people and, as a result, the action research movement often appears to be held together by little more than a common contempt for academic theorising and a general disenchantment with ‘mainstream’ research’ (Carr, 1989, p. 85).

However, I would argue that as long as an action researcher is following the ongoing process of developing learning and action, reflecting on the learning and action and living through their values in collaboration with others, then they are indeed, carrying out action research. The actual model of action research which is followed is of less significance. Thus I am in agreement with the views of McTaggart (1996), as reported in this section.

In the following section, I will provide a rationale for why the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003) was used as a framework for this piece of research. I will end the section by summarising the ways in which the RADIO approach includes the key elements of action research.

### 3.7: The action research design – The Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach

For the action research, an action research paradigm was followed, known as the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003). The RADIO approach was developed by EPs on the training course at the University of Birmingham (Knight and Timmins, 1995), and provides EPs with a
framework for negotiating the precise nature of work to be carried out on behalf of research stakeholders at systemic and organisational levels.

The phases of RADIO, along with its twelve stages and typical activities are as shown in table 3.2:

**Table 3.2: RADIO approach: Research and Development in Organisations, adapted from Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly (2003, pp. 231-233)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RADIO phases</th>
<th>RADIO stages</th>
<th>Characteristic RADIO activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying concerns (Stages 1-4)</td>
<td>1. Awareness of a need</td>
<td>TEP’s contact with key stakeholder results in identification of potential need for organisational/systemic work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Invitation to act</td>
<td>TEP contacts research stakeholders in a position to approve and resource the research role and negotiates role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Identifying organisational and cultural issues</td>
<td>Initial exploration of factors likely to support or impede the initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Identifying stakeholders in area of need</td>
<td>At this stage, it is useful to identify major stakeholders. Agreeing processes for collaborating with stakeholders for feedback and discussion e.g. coordinating group and initiative coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research methods (Stages 5-8)</td>
<td>5. Agreeing focus of concern (research aims)</td>
<td>Identifying research aims and purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Negotiating framework for information gathering</td>
<td>Issues and decisions regarding methodology, methods, resources and timescales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Gathering information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information is gathered using agreed methods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Processing information with research sponsors/stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing findings with stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Organisational change mode</strong> (Stages 9-12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Agreeing areas for future action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussing findings in relation to organisation’s needs and identifying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>areas for action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Action planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholder led planning process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Implementation/action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholders facilitating change within organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Evaluating action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stakeholders reviewing effectiveness of action and possibly requesting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>further TEP involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly (2003) suggest that stages 1-4 refer mainly to the identification of the organisation’s needs and the development of the partnership between facilitator and organisation; stages 5-8 are representative of the research methodology and methods aspect of the RADIO approach and stages 9-12 relate to the managing of any proposals for organisational change.

The RADIO approach was informed by the work of Schein (1989), who considered and wrote about the way that organisational culture can impact on the relationship between the external research facilitator and research sponsors and stakeholders (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003). The RADIO approach was originally developed by Knight and Timmins (1995) to help TEPs on the professional training course at The University of Birmingham to, ‘...conceptualise and manage their school improvement work’ (Timmins et al, 1995, p. 230). The RADIO approach has been identified as
beneficial in supporting TEPs to carry out research (Timmins, Bham, MacFadyen and Ward, 2006). As the authors state, the RADIO process enables TEPs to,

‘...feel their way into ‘real world’ research from the largely positivist and experimental orientation of their undergraduate psychology courses’ (Timmins et al., ibid., p. 306).

It is also helpful in allowing for TEPs’ time limitations and in recognising sponsors’ accountability for resources (Timmins, Bham, MacFadyen and Ward, 2006). From stakeholders’ points of view, the RADIO approach has been identified as helpful in allowing stakeholders to reflect on the way in which the research process and outcomes can meet their organisational needs as a result of its phase of negotiation (Timmins et al., ibid.).

My search of the literature indicates that the RADIO approach as a framework for action research has not been widely evaluated. However, it has been evaluated in the following ways: Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly (2003) used the approach to evaluate a mainstream behaviour support initiative; Timmins, Bham, MacFadyen and Ward (2006) used the approach in the context of evaluating consultation as an EPS service delivery model, reporting that that collaborative working within the EPS promoted individual and organisational working. Ashton (2009) applied the approach to five action research projects carried out in schools regarding pupils’ transition from primary school to secondary school. In Ashton’s (ibid.) research, in each if the schools the main form of data collection were focus groups with pupils, which were carried out at Stage 7 of the action research. Ashton (ibid.) found through her research, that the RADIO approach, ‘...proved a useful framework for action research’ (Ashton, ibid., p. 231), but she felt that the approach would have been improved upon with an additional stage, which she referred to as ‘step-10 plus’ (Ashton, ibid., p. 228). This additional step, or stage, which was agreed by all of the schools involved in the action research, allowed for the findings to be shared with the children who were in the focus groups and allowed for action plans to be discussed. Ashton (ibid.) felt that this additional step enabled pupils to see what would happen as a direct result of their participation; it set up accountability for key staff involved through enabling pupils to ask questions; it
allowed the pupils to have some say in planned actions, and provided an opportunity for staff to explain their constraints to pupils and agree an action plan. It is interesting that the research by Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly (2003) and Timmins, Bham, MacFadyen and Ward (2006) did not involve the authors working directly with children or young people; it is possible that if it had, then the authors might have identified the need for an additional step within the approach.

The RADIO approach as a framework for conducting action research appealed to me for three main reasons; firstly, because it was produced by EPs for TEPs (Knight and Timmins, 1995), thus giving it a particular relevance to my practice as a TEP; secondly, because it has been identified by researchers as beneficial in supporting TEPs to carry out research (Timmins, Bham, MacFayden and Ward, 2006); and thirdly, because I felt that providing each stakeholder with the RADIO framework would give them something concrete to focus on, allowing more easily for explanation and discussion about action research and each of our roles within the process. Another appealing aspect of the framework is that the researcher is not restricted by any particular methods of data collection and analysis; it allows for negotiation with stakeholders.

Although the RADIO approach is presented visually as a model of systematic stages rather than a cycle, it nevertheless includes the key elements of action research. The RADIO approach comprises of the key elements of planning actions, executing actions and exploration or fact finding for the purpose of evaluating the results of each action taken. The first four stages (Clarifying concerns) of the RADIO approach, seem to concur with Lewin’s (1948) description of the initial cycle of action research involving examining the idea carefully and carrying out further fact-finding about the situation (Lewin, ibid.). Out of stages 1-4 of the RADIO approach, stages 5-6 emerge, whereby research aims and purposes, as well as a negotiated framework for information gathering takes place. This is similar to what Lewin described as emerging out of the first period of planning in his model:

‘...two items emerge: namely, ‘an overall plan’ of how to reach the objective and secondly, a decision in regard to the first step of action’ (Lewin, 1948, p. 205).
Stages 7-12 of the RADIO model seem to relate to Lewin’s, ‘spiral of steps’ (Lewin, 1946, p. 38), involving planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action (Lewin, ibid.).

3.8: Design

This research utilised a primarily qualitative single-case study design using an action research framework. An advantage of using a case study design is that it allows for a detailed in-depth analysis of a specific individual or group of individuals to be conducted (Yin, 2009). Further, Robson (2002) has stated that the flexibility of case studies in design, approach and method, encourages their use as a model for action research. Thus, a case study design seemed appropriate.

A quantitative design would not have been suitable, as these require strict specification of the design prior to data collection (Robson, 2002). Referring to the quantitative-qualitative debate which occurred during the late 20th century, Greene (2005) states that quantitative advocates traditionally aimed for, ‘...realism, objectivity, causal explanation and universal truth’ (p. 274) while qualitative proponents emphasised, ‘...interpretative, value-laden, contextual and contingent nature of social knowledge’ (p. 274). From a relativist perspective, there is not one universal truth, which fits in with the general qualitative perspective that our knowledge and experience is formed by subjective and cultural viewpoints and through our conversations and activities (Yardley, 1997).

In action research, the types of data and methods of data collection are not predetermined and so a flexible (qualitative) design (Robson, 2002) was needed. That is not to say that quantitative methods of data collection could not be incorporated within such a design; as Robson (ibid.) has commented,

‘... so-called qualitative designs can incorporate quantitative methods of data collection. All of these approaches show substantial flexibility in their research design, typically anticipating that the design will emerge and develop during data collection’ (Robson, 2002, p. 164).
A potential vulnerability of a single-case study design, as Yin (2009) has identified, is that the researcher will have put, ‘all...eggs in one basket’ (Yin, ibid., p. 61). He feels that there could be ‘substantial’ (Yin, ibid., p. 61) analytic benefits to having two or more case studies, and advises that, ‘...when you have the choice (and resources), multiple-case designs may be preferred over single-case designs’ (Yin, ibid., p. 60). One of the reasons he gives for this is that with two or more cases, there can be the possibility of direct replication (Yin, ibid.). However, the focus of action research is to bring about positive changes (Robson, 2002) in a particular situation. It cannot be assumed that different secondary school staff within the same school or in another school, would have identified the same issues and priorities; therefore, I would argue that action researchers are not seeking to achieve direct replication of cases.

3.9: Participants

The LA’s team manager for CiC, who identified the need for organisational working at secondary school level to support the needs of CiC, and the LA’s VSH, were involved in the initial stages of my research. In order to deepen my understanding of priorities for CiC from the perspective of the LA, I interviewed the team manager for CiC and the VSH prior to beginning the action research in the secondary school. I kept in contact with them via email throughout the research, and I fed back findings to them at the end of it. It was hoped that by keeping the LA stakeholders updated, they would recognise the value of action research and thus negotiate future opportunities for this type of work with schools. It was hoped that the findings from the research could also be shared amongst wider audiences e.g. through delivery of training sessions by the LA stakeholders to designated teachers, and ultimately further open up lines of communication between the LA and its schools.

The research participants were equals in the research; that is, I was not studying them, but myself, and my interest was in how they responded to me through our interactions (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006).

The rationale for choosing the secondary school approached for involvement in this research is described in detail in section (4.1.1). In the secondary school, the key
stakeholders were the designated teacher for CiC and the deputy head teacher. I also carried out some individual work with a Year 8 CiC.

**3.10: Research methods**

**3.10.1: Data collection methods**

In action research because it is a collaborative process, all participants are researchers. This being so, data gathering is the responsibility of everyone involved, as is data analysis. It is not decided beforehand what data will be collected, rather this is negotiated between participants and decided upon as the action research progresses. Waters-Adams (2006) believes that the prime criterion for choosing a particular data gathering method should be whether the anticipated method will give useful information about the practice under study.

For this piece of research, qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used during the research process as necessary; the RADIO approach (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003) allows for flexibility in the range of approaches used in order to meet the requirements of the research brief.

The following sections will detail the research methods which were used for this piece of research.

**3.10.2: Reflective diary**

As stated by Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001), ‘...early thoughts and interpretations of events need to become ‘data’ at later stages of the enquiry’ (p. 20), so the authors suggest that for this reason, keeping a reflective diary from the outset of the project is often helpful. Throughout the research process, I thus kept a reflective diary, in which I recorded my, ‘...observations, feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections, ideas, and explanations’ (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982, p. 40). The diary was personal to me; its contents were not shared with stakeholders. The diary entries were kept in a loose-leaf binder; this enabled me to arrange entries into key themes. The diary also
contained other types of records; for example, emails which I had received from stakeholders. I carried the binder with me at all times, which meant that I recorded observations, feelings, questions et cetera, as soon as I could. I did this so that my recollection of experiences was sufficiently accurate. I recognised the potential impact that length of time would have on my memory of experiences.

3.10.3: Semi-structured interviews

Prior to beginning the action research at the secondary school, qualitative data in the form of semi-structured interviews with the LA’s team manager for CiC and the LA’s VSH teacher for CiC was collected. Semi-structured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge from the questions or answers, in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Britten, 1999).

The interviews were carried out in order to elicit what the priorities were at LA level in supporting the needs of CiC, according to the LA’s team manager for CiC and the VSH.

The interview schedule ensured that the following areas were covered through the use of open questions: the role/responsibilities of each participant; what they feel is working well within the LA or schools to support the needs of CiC; what the barriers are to supporting the needs of CiC within schools and what else they feel needs to be done to enable CiC to have more positive school experiences. Appendix A provides the full list of questions.

Although the interviews were conducted with a view of eliciting the opinions of the LA stakeholders regarding issues related to CiC, it cannot be assumed that their opinions are representative of all LA figures who are involved in supporting CiC. Further, as a semi-structured interview format was used, this will have naturally influenced the issues which were discussed.

At the end of the action research cycle, in February 2010, the designated teacher at the secondary school was interviewed. As part of the semi-structured interview, he was asked the following questions:
What are your reflections on the action research?

Has taking part in this action research changed how you view the role of the EP?

Can you think of any ways that the school-based PEP interview schedule could be further developed?

For each of the interviews, participants were interviewed in suitable rooms at locations of their choice. Each participant was interviewed once and the interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes.

3.10.4: Designing interview schedules

This section will explore good practice in designing interview schedules. The work in the secondary school resulted in the development of a school-based PEP interview schedule (Appendices H, I and L), which covered the four resiliency factors which as suggested by the literature can bring about positive change in the school experiences for CiC.

An interview is described as, ‘...a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out’ (Robson, 2002, p. 272). The advice set out in Robson (ibid.), as well as solution-focused principles, informed decision making regarding the style of interview and its content.

It was decided that the questions included in the school-based PEP interview schedule would include closed, open and scaling questions, with a particular focus on scaling questions. Although we could justify reasons to include each of the questions in the school-based PEP interview schedule, the designated teacher and I predominantly included scaling questions because they provide scope for working towards solutions. The designated teacher had not had experience of using scaling questions with CiC; however, when I introduced him to them by setting them in the context of solution focused approaches, he wanted to trial their use with CiC. This was because they met his need for a creative, flexible means of eliciting information about the CiC, which could then be used to inform next steps.
Solution focused approaches involve future orientated questioning and solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) (Boyle, 2007) and are becoming increasingly commonly used by EPs (Boyle, ibid.). The essential elements of SFBT have been described as firstly the therapist finding out where the client is trying to get to or what the client’s preferred future is, and then finding out what the client is already doing or has done in the past which may help this future come about (George, Iveson and Ratner, 2006). Scaling exercises, resource building, exception finding and the use of the ‘miracle question’ are some examples of techniques that can be used to help to support the client get to where they want to be. These approaches are appealing as they promote hope.

In terms of rating scales, there are differences in opinion as to whether 5 or 10 point scales should be utilised; Cohen, Morrison and Manion (2007) advocate the use of 5 point scales, whereas George, Iveson and Ratner (2006) prefer the use of 10 point scales. The designated teacher and I decided that the CiC would be allowed to choose which type of scale to use in order to give them as much ownership as possible over the interview process. We also felt that efforts should be made to make the scaling as user-friendly and clear as possible; for example, through replacing the numbers with faces or providing descriptions to correspond with each number.

Thorne and Ivens’s (1999) research found that when SFBT as an interviewing technique was used with adolescents presenting with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and then compared with the use of problem centred approaches, SFBT was found to be the most effective technique.

Paying heed to the recommendations set out in Robson (2002), the designated teacher and I gave consideration to the order that the interview schedule would be delivered to CiC. For example, we decided to present the area of the school-based PEP interview schedule which was focused on friendships, before the area about teachers, as we felt that CiC may feel more comfortable talking about friendships first. However, we acknowledged that this was entirely subjective. We also talked about how to conclude the interviews, acknowledging that the CiC should be made aware of who they could
talk to should they wish to discuss further any issues which may have arisen through the interview.

Suggestions in italics were included on the school-based PEP interview schedule as a guide to delivery for designated teachers.

3.10.5: School Information Management Systems (SIMS)

A Management Information System (MIS) is the computer program on which school information can be stored. Within schools, this program is known as SIMS (School Information Management System). SIMS provides school with data related to all pupils. This can include details of pupils’ attendance, behavioural issues, emergency contact information, special needs and whether they have been excluded or are in care. As SIMS provides school with historical data, trends can be identified. For example, a pattern may be identified in a child’s absence from school. It could be, for example, that a pupil tends to miss every Wednesday from school because she does not like getting changed for PE. If a trend is identified, then the next step for the school is to put in place appropriate support for the child.

Capita Education Services’ SIMS is the most widely used MIS for educational establishments in the United Kingdom. According to figures released in 2009 by Capita Education Services, over 21,000 schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland already have SIMS in place in their school and 250,000 teachers, administrators and school managers use SIMS every day.

It has been reported by Massey (2004) that SIMS can improve home-school links because of the ease of sourcing data from SIMS and reproducing in a professional looking format for carers/parents. This may result in schools being able to share a child’s progress with the home more regularly than was done in the past.

For this piece of research, SIMS data was collected in relation to key areas in-school linked to factors associated with promoting resiliency (for example, achievement points, which is associated with being valued by teachers and CiC feeling a sense of safety, identity and belonging at school). These areas had been negotiated with the
deputy head teacher, who had a particular interest in promoting resilience. As well as collecting data for CiC, data was collected for a comparison group, consisting of the same number of non-CiC as there are CiC in the school.

3.11: Data analysis methods

In the same way that data gathering is a collaborative process, so is data analysis. If a particular person has responsibility for collecting data, their interpretation of findings should be shared with other stakeholders for their views, which may be different. In doing this and thus creating different interpretations, debate is stimulated and new implications for practice may be formed (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001). It is through these discussions, that knowledge is created.

3.11.1: Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with LA’s team manager for CiC and VSH

Thematic analysis was carried out on each of the two semi-structured interviews with the LA’s team manager for CiC and the VSH, in order to draw out specific themes. Following this process, emerging themes from each of the interviews were compared to draw out any similarities. The information gathered from these semi-structured interviews was used to inform my understanding of the priorities at LA level in supporting the needs of CiC.

Thematic analysis has been described as, ‘...a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). A theme is something that captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke, ibid.). As acknowledged by Braun and Clarke (ibid.), one of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility. Unlike some other qualitative analytical methods, which originate from, or are linked to a particular theoretical or epistemological positions (for example, interpretative phenomenological analysis is linked to a phenomenological epistemology); thematic analysis is compatible with
essentialist and constructionist paradigms and thus retains theoretical freedom (Braun and Clarke, ibid.). Despite this freedom, Braun and Clarke (ibid.) state that the theoretical position of a thematic analysis should be made clear. My position is constructionist; that is, I am trying to make sense of the constructions of issues related to CiC in my LA.

In thematic analysis, the researcher takes on an active role. Themes do not emerge; it is the researcher’s judgement that decides what constitutes a theme. Importantly, the prevalence of a theme across the data set does not determine its, ‘keyness’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pg. 82). What is of concern is whether the theme captures something of importance in relation to the overall research question.

I decided whether I should utilise an inductive or theoretical approach to identify themes. The main difference between the two approaches is that in a theoretical approach, the researcher’s theoretical interest in the topic leads the decision of which themes are identified, whereas in an inductive approach, that analysis is determined by the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). That is, the data is coded without trying to fit into a pre-existing coding framework or the analytic preconceptions of the researcher (Braun and Clarke, ibid.). Although I had read research on the topic of CiC, and I was interested in any themes related to this area, I wanted to code the data without paying attention to the themes that previous research on the topic had identified. This was because I did not want to limit my analysis by focusing on specific areas and I wanted to understand the constructions of the team manager for CiC and the VSH. I felt that richer data would be obtained by broadening out my analysis. Thus, an inductive thematic analysis was selected.

As a thematic analysis typically focuses exclusively on one level at which themes can be identified (Braun and Clarke, 2006), I decided upon which level to carry out thematic analysis. I made the decision to carry out thematic analysis at a latent level. Unlike analysis at a semantic level, which is at a surface level, so the researcher does not look for meaning beyond what a participant has said or what has been written; for latent thematic analysis, interpretation is involved. Analysis,
‘...goes beyond the semantic content of the data and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies - that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a six-phase guide to performing thematic analysis, which I followed.

**Table 3.3: Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guide to performing thematic analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase number</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of the process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Familiarising yourself with your data</td>
<td>Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Generating initial codes</td>
<td>Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Searching for themes</td>
<td>Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reviewing themes</td>
<td>Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Defining and naming themes</td>
<td>Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells,</td>
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</table>
generating clear definitions and names for each theme

6 Producing the report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcription</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for ‘accuracy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been</td>
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This is the process which I followed; however, it should be recognised that there is no clear agreement about what thematic analysis is and how it can be carried out, and other processes may be followed.

Braun and Clarke (2006) have also devised a 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis, which I chose to follow.

Table 3.4: Braun and Clarke’s (2006) checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis
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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>thorough, inclusive and comprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>All relevant extracts for all/each theme have been collated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Themes have been checked against each other back to the original data set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Themes are internally coherent, consistent and distinctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written report</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.

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

3.11.2: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of semi-structured interview with the secondary school’s designated teacher for CiC

The semi-structured interview with the designated teacher for CiC at the secondary school was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This method of analysis explores a participant’s view of a topic under investigation (Smith, Jarman and Osborn, 1999). Jonathan Smith, who developed IPA, describes it as,

‘...an attempt to unravel the meanings contained in accounts through a process of interpretative engagement with the texts and transcripts’ (Smith, 1997, p. 189).

IPA appealed to me because of its focus on the experiences of individuals in context, moving away from hypothesis testing and prior assumptions (Isherwood, Burns, Naylor and Read, 2007).

Of key importance in IPA is what the, ‘...meanings, particular experiences, events and states hold for participants’ (Smith and Osborn, 2003, p. 51). Through the use of IPA, I wanted to explore the designated teacher’s personal perceptions of the action research we had collaboratively undertaken.

My role in the process was active; I was trying to make sense of the designated teacher trying to make sense of his world. I wanted as far as possible to understand how the designated teacher perceived the action research process. However, as Smith and
Osborn (2003) have cautioned, a researcher’s access is dependent upon and complicated by the interviewee’s own interpretative activity. Further, the meanings of comments made by the designated teacher were open to my interpretation; another researcher may have interpreted the information differently.

The process for analysis which I followed was based on the approach outlined by Smith and Osborn (2003, pp.64-77).

The first part of the analysis involved the transcript of my interview with the designated teacher. I read the transcript several times and made notes in the left hand side of the margin about anything I felt was interesting or significant. In the right hand column, I documented emerging theme titles and then from this, I produced a preliminary list of themes. Connections between the themes were then made through clustering themes together. Names were given to each set of the clusters; these are what Smith and Osborn (2003) refer to as superordinate themes. The process is described in further detail in section 4.1.12.

I found IPA to be a useful approach in enabling me to explore, and reflect upon, the designated teacher’s personal perceptions of the action research process.

3.11.3: Descriptive analysis of SIMS data

Anonymised SIMS data for eight children was collected in total; four of whom were CiC, while the remaining four were non-CiC. This was done in order to generate shared understanding about whether or not there were particular issues for CiC compared with their peers in key areas in-school linked to factors associated with resiliency. Due to the relatively small number of children, it was thus not possible to carry out inferential statistical analysis of the SIMS data. It is generally agreed that a sample size of at least thirty is required to analyse data statistically (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Consequently, the data collected for these eight children was analysed descriptively.

If there had been a larger sample size and there had been a longer time frame for the research, it is possible that the SIMS data would have been analysed statistically.
However, had this been the case, I would have still ensured that there was reflective discussion about the findings, in order to prevent the statistics being taken at ‘face value’. As Carr (1989) has pointed out, action researchers, sometimes through their analysis of data and limited criticism and self-reflection, vindicate positivism. SIMS data pre and post my involvement could have been collected and compared with data from a non-CiC group. However, it was felt that eight months was not long enough a period to measure the impact, if any, of my involvement, so only pre data was collected in order to generate shared understanding of issues rather than to measure impact.

3.12: Critique of methodology

The limitation of the research’s case study design is that findings can only be tentatively generalised to a wider population. However, Stark and Torance (2005) would argue that that this is not the aim of a case study, as they lend themselves to generating an understanding of ‘the case’ rather than generalising to a wider population. As action research was carried out, I was supporting key staff members at the secondary school to achieve the outcomes that we had negotiated. Action research, by its nature, is about collaboration between researcher and participants, rather than trying to impose the researcher’s ideas about ‘what works’ onto staff. The use of the RADIO approach as a framework for carrying out action research can be generalised and the school-based PEP interview schedule may be of interest to other practitioners.

However, it cannot be assumed that different secondary school staff within the same school or indeed, in another school, would have identified the same issues and priorities. Thus, it would be expected that had I carried out the research in another school, the actions undertaken within the RADIO approach, would have been different, and thus the aim of my research was not to achieve generalisability. To repeat the quote used previously, and taken from McNiff and Whitehead (2009),

‘Action research is about improving knowledge about existing situations, each of which is unique to the people in the situation, so the knowledge cannot be
generalised or applied, although it can be shared’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009, p. 13).

However, if more time was available, it would have been interesting to use an action research paradigm to compare and contrast the practice of two secondary schools.

It was decided that I would work with a secondary school rather than a primary school due to the greater complexity of secondary schools in terms of numbers of pupils, numbers of staff members, size of schools etc. However, it is possible that this greater complexity was the reason for difficulties regarding staff availability for the anticipated focus group sessions. Focus groups have been described as, ‘...a group discussion on a particular topic organised for research purposes’ (Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick, 2008, p. 293). The purpose of a focus group is to generate information on collective views and the meanings that lie behind the views (Gill et al., ibid.). Focus groups also enable the researcher to develop their understanding of participants’ views and beliefs (Morgan, 1998). Focus group sessions would have allowed me to not only develop my understanding of the views and meanings of a greater number of staff in the time available, but holding the groups would have facilitated discussions between staff members on the topic of CiC. Staff would also have had the opportunity for collaborative working.

However, due to the risk of confidentiality being breached if staff members who were not previously aware of a pupil’s ‘in care’ status became aware of this as a result of a focus group meeting; it was agreed that I would meet with key staff in school individually. In addition, the deputy head teacher felt that staff members’ teaching commitments would make it problematic to co-ordinate diaries to find a mutually convenient time for group meetings. Although, as explained in the previous paragraph, focus group meetings would have been advantageous in several respects; there were advantages to meeting individually with staff. Individual meetings eliminated the possibility of bias, which may have occurred in a group situation if dominant members had been present, as well as the possibility of power struggles (Robinson, 1999). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) have stated that from an action research perspective, it is acceptable to work at an individual level with participants, as the
researcher’s role in choosing the most appropriate participants and enabling participants is more important than the actual number of participants. Further, as previously stated, there were issues of confidentiality regarding staff members’ awareness of the young people’s ‘in care’ status. Group meetings, rather than one-to-one meetings, may have increased the likelihood of specific CiC’s identities being revealed to staff members, possibly going against the wishes of the CiC. During my one-to-one meetings with the designated teacher, we were both very mindful of the importance of maintaining the anonymity of the CiC during our discussions; for example, through using code names.

Time constraints also impacted on the methods for data collection. SIMS data was collected in relation to agreed outcomes for CiC (for example, school attendance), following the initial session with the deputy head teacher. As well as the collection of this anonymised SIMS data for the four CiC in the school, anonymised data was collected for a comparison group, consisting of the same number of non-CiC. A decision was made to not collect any post SIMS data with the intention of identifying whether any gains had been made as a result of my involvement, as it was decided that the time frame of eight months was too limited to draw any valid conclusions.

It is important to raise the point that changes outside of my control and the school’s control may have occurred within the CiC’s home situations during the duration of the piece of research, for example, possible placement changes. CiC as a group are particularly vulnerable to changing home circumstances. However, I only worked directly with one of the pupils; there were no pre and post measure changes and the purpose of the research was led by the school’s needs meaning that the focus ended up being on using resiliency based approaches to supporting CiC within school rather than adopting individual young people as foci.

Although it could be argued that the research does not include the voice of CiC as much as might be desirable, the primary purpose of the research was for me to work at an organisational level to facilitate change by supporting staff in a secondary school to develop their practice in relation to CiC. Throughout the action research, the
designated teacher continued to have meetings with CiC as a natural part of his role, in which their voices were elicited.

Risk analysis

Table 3.5: Risk analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Risk rating (high/medium/low)</th>
<th>Contingency Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical difficulties around research involving CiC</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Ground rules will be set at the start of each meeting with stakeholders around the issue of pupil confidentiality. Care will be taken to ensure that sensitive information about the CiC will not be shared with any parties if pupil/parent/carer consent has not been granted. Care will also be taken to ensure that individual CiC will not be identifiable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of pupil recruitment</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>The designated teacher to make suggestions of pupil(s) who may be keen to participate in the research. If consent is not obtained from the pupil and carer, then the pupil will not be involved in the research. Designated teacher (or other staff members) to talk about their perceptions of the experiences of individual CiC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants not giving consent for interviews to be digitally recorded</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>If consent is not given, there will be no digital recordings – I will make notes during the interview(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of participant recruitment e.g. head teacher declines offer of research to be carried out in the school, designated teacher declines to become involved</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Choose alternative secondary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of participant recruitment (LA team manager for CiC)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Request to interview another representative from the LA’s CiC team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of participant recruitment (VSH for CiC)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Request to interview another representative from the LA’s CiC team.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.13: Ethical principles and considerations

Throughout the research, careful efforts were made to ensure that the ethical principles and considerations were made in accordance with the guidelines set out in the British Psychological Society’s (BPS’s) ‘Code of Ethics and Conduct’ (BPS, 2006). As Robson (2002) has recognised, action research carries additional ethical implications compared with other types of research, so in addition to following the guidelines set out in the BPS’s ‘Code of Ethics and Conduct’ (2006), researchers need to be aware of
ethical implications arising from the participants having an active, collaborative role within the research. As Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) state, “Good practice in action research is about justifiable decision-making in situations directly involving human well-being” (Winter and Munn-Giddings, ibid., p. 255). Ethical boundaries were negotiated and agreed with stakeholders in the school, such as the use of code names if they wished to talk about the needs of particular CiC. Negotiation and good faith should be part of ethical consideration. Action research is not individualistic; ultimately I had a responsibility to the participants to place their interests above my own (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). The sections below, which are covered in the ‘Code of Ethics and Conduct’ (BPS, ibid.), will demonstrate how ethical principles and considerations were adhered to.

3.13.1: Informed consent

The head teacher of the secondary school received a letter, detailing the nature and purpose of the research (Appendix B) and there was a follow-up phone call to allow opportunity for questions. The letter which was sent to the secondary school was also shared with the deputy head teacher and designated teacher for CiC. Verbal permission was sought for hand written notes to be made during meetings with stakeholders. Verbal permission was also sought from interviewees, for their interviews to be digitally recorded and transcribed. The reason that the semi-structured interviews were recorded was because I wanted to carry out detailed analysis of the interviews.

One of the CiC at the school was approached by the designated teacher and asked whether he would like to participate in the research. The pupil was provided with a letter detailing the research, which included a return slip for him to complete, with an ‘opt in’ or ‘opt out’ option (Appendix C). No pressure was applied to the pupil; he was informed that the choice or whether or not to participate was his. In addition, his foster carer was provided with a letter and return slip to complete (Appendix D), and the designated teacher also contacted the pupil’s social worker to seek her verbal consent. Consent was obtained from the pupil, his foster carer and social worker.
At the beginning of the meeting with the pupil, he was made aware of his right to withdraw at any stage during the research and his right to decline to answer any of the questions put to him. He was informed that the designated teacher and I would be present during the meeting and that we both would be asking him questions related to his experiences at school. The meeting with the CiC took place in the designated teacher’s office, which was familiar to him. It was hoped that carrying out the meeting in a familiar place would help the pupil to feel more at ease than if the meeting had taken place in an unfamiliar setting.

Participants were informed that all names of settings and persons would be anonymised. Participants were asked for their verbal permission for the research outcomes to be shared within the EPS, between participants and between key stakeholders from the LA. As the participants from the school indicated that they also wished to share the main research outcomes with other staff members, verbal permission for this was sought from all participants.

3.13.2: Debriefing

Participants were debriefed at the conclusion of their participation, in order to inform them of the outcomes and nature of the research, to identify any unforeseen harm, discomfort, or misconceptions and in order to arrange for assistance as needed. They were also thanked for their involvement. The participants were given my work address and work phone number and were invited to contact me in case they had any further queries or concerns. In addition to the above points, the CiC who was involved in the meeting with the designated teacher and I, was informed that should he feel any upset arising from issues discussed in the meeting then he could come and talk to the designated teacher at any point about his feelings. We discussed with the CiC who else he may wish to talk to in and out of school.
3.13.3: Confidentiality
The anonymity of all pupils, professionals and settings has been respected and all names have been changed from those used during the digital recordings when they appear in the transcript and research report. In line with the Data Protection Act (1998), all personal information concerning research participants has been stored securely and confidentially. This information will be destroyed when no longer needed.

There are ethical issues around confidentiality in carrying out research involving CiC. For this reason, it was agreed that if staff referred to any of the CiC within the school, they would use code names for them.

3.13.4: Protection
The four ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity were upheld at all times throughout the research process.

3.13.5: Withdrawal option
Participants were made aware that should they choose to do so, they could withdraw from the research at any point or decline to answer any of the questions put to them during the interviews. Participants were informed that if they opted to withdraw, then any information provided by them at any stage of the research process would be destroyed, and not included in the final write-up, unless they indicated otherwise. No participants chose to withdraw from the research.

3.13.6: Avoidance of deception
The school received a letter addressed to the head teacher, which detailed the purpose and nature of the research. This was followed by a telephone conversation to the head teacher, when further questions were asked and access negotiated. Key stakeholders within the school were informed by letter of the purpose and nature of the research. My work contact phone number and work address was provided. The
same procedure was used with the LA stakeholders. The CiC who participated in the research, his foster carer and social worker, were informed of the research via a letter.

3.13.7: Benefits of the research

Participants were able to access the research findings. They were offered a written summary of main findings, to be posted or emailed to them. My work contact details were also provided in case the participants had further queries/questions. The outcomes of the research were also shared with EPS colleagues and key stakeholders from the LA.

It is anticipated that outcomes of the research will inform practice both at school level and at LA level in supporting the needs of CiC. In terms of benefits of the research for the school, it will provide staff with information about what seems to be working well in terms of the support currently offered to CiC, and areas in which there is room for improvement. The aim of using an action research methodology is that in being non-directive; it should empower staff and inspire and encourage them to try new approaches in order to support CiC’s needs. It is hoped that the written summary of research findings provided to participants from the school will be used to inform future practice, and will be shared amongst other staff members. The research also aims to provide useful insight for practitioners within the LA of how multi-agency working within schools can support the needs of CiC. LA stakeholders may wish to use the findings from the research to inform their discussions with other professionals or to incorporate into training sessions about the needs of CiC. The findings may also be used to inform LA policies regarding CiC’s needs.

The findings will also be shared with colleagues from the EPS. As part of their roles, all EPs at the EPS where I am employed, work with CiC as well as individuals and organisations involved in supporting CiC. The research outcomes may be helpful in guiding EPs’ practice.
3.14: Summary of methodology

This section will provide a brief summary of the methodology and will end by outlining how the results section is to be presented.

The research utilised a primarily qualitative single-case study design, focusing on a secondary school in the North West of England. The school had been identified by the LA’s team manager for CiC as having a high number of CiC, compared with other schools within the LA.

The overall aim of the research was to enable the secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC at whole school level. This was done through engaging in collaborative action research with key staff in the school. I supported the school to bridge the gap between resilience theory and practice in order to develop the practice of staff which would in turn hopefully bring about positive change in the school experiences of CiC. This was done through 1) focusing on four key areas from the literature, which have been highlighted by researchers as improving the school experiences for CiC (see table 2.3), and 2) through implementation of an action research paradigm, using a collaborative action research process referred to as RADIO (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003).

My methodology emerged through the action research inquiry and thus it was not pre-planned. It was relational, meaning that it developed through my understanding of the individuals who I worked with, who in turn have contributed to my developing understanding of myself. Through the action research process, I generated my own living theory of practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009) as I learned through others.

The results section has been written in the first person as it allows me to show clearly my own values and to account for my practice within my values. It will show the dynamic processes I went through in collaboration with others during the action research.
Chapter 4: Results

4.1: The RADIO approach’s stages undertaken during action research

A summary of the stages and activities carried out during the RADIO process are provided in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Stages and activities of the RADIO model carried out during this piece of action research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RADIO phases</th>
<th>RADIO stages</th>
<th>RADIO activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying concerns</td>
<td>1. Awareness of a need</td>
<td>I made contact with the team manager for CiC to discuss the potential need for organisational/systemic work linked to the experiences of CiC of secondary school age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Stages 1-4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>I was introduced to VSH by the team manager for CiC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Invitation to act</td>
<td>I carried out individual semi-structured interviews with the team manager for CiC and the VSH to help me to find out what the issues are at LA level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I made contact with the relevant staff at the secondary school via letter, email and phone calls. The secondary school was recommended to me by the team manager for CiC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Identifying organisational and cultural issues</td>
<td>With staff there was initial exploration of factors likely to support or impede the initiative, such as time constraints and the limits of staff availability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Identifying stakeholders in area of need</td>
<td>Major stakeholders in the research were identified as the secondary school’s designated teacher for CiC and the deputy head teacher. The LA’s team manager for CiC and the VSH for CiC were identified as major stakeholders from the LA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It was agreed that I would facilitate meetings with secondary school staff, but there would be no lead group member in the sense that meetings would be collaborative. I agreed that I would make notes during meetings and an agreed action plan would be produced at the end of meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research methods (Stages 5-8)</td>
<td>It was agreed that the focus of concern would be to develop the practice of staff through use of a resiliency approach to bring about positive change in the school experiences for CiC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Agreeing focus of concern (research aims)</td>
<td>Agreed RADIO approach would be used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agreed that the research would take place over eight months, beginning in July 2009.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and ending in February 2010.

Agreed that dates of meetings would be organised as deemed appropriate and contact would also be maintained through email and phone calls.

Agreed that I would meet on an individual basis firstly with the deputy head teacher and then work primarily with the designated teacher.

| 7. Gathering information | SIMS data was collected linked to factors associated with resiliency. Where possible SIMS data was collected to link with the following main factors which the literature suggests can bring about positive change in the school experiences for CiC. These were:

(i) The importance of being valued by teachers;

(ii) Providing CiC with a flexible and planned approach for educational support, involving other agencies;

(iii) Close links between school and home; |
(iv) CiC feeling a sense of safety, identity and belonging at school e.g. through having set routines, joining after-school and lunchtime clubs, receiving positive recognition and forming close peer relationships.

8. Processing information with research sponsors/stakeholders

SIMS data discussed with deputy head teacher and designated teacher.

Organisational change mode (Stages 9-12)

9. Agreeing areas for future action

SIMS data discussed in relation to organisation’s needs and a further area was identified for action. That is, the designated teacher wanted to work collaboratively with me to devise a school-based PEP interview schedule, which could be used in his meetings with CiC and which would be, ‘pupil friendly’. It was agreed that our future action would involve collaborative working to create the school-based PEP, which could be used as a basis for conversations between the designated teacher and CiC. We thus decided that it would take the form of an interview schedule. Broad areas to be covered in it were agreed.
The designated teacher and I discussed further issues related to organisational development and improvement. The designated teacher said that he felt there may be a role for me in delivering training to staff about risk and resiliency principles for children and young people or to facilitate discussion about risk and resiliency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. Action planning</th>
<th>No time available for INSET this academic year as all sessions had been pre-arranged.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues to be covered in the school-based PEP interview schedule were discussed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11. Implementation/action</th>
<th>The designated teacher and I trialled the use of the school-based PEP interview schedule during a meeting with a CiC.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CiC given opportunity to share his reflections on the school-based PEP interview schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CiC debriefed before he returned to class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Evaluating action</td>
<td>I reflected on the use of the school-based PEP interview schedule, with the designated teacher. These reflections led to us making several changes to the PEP interview school-based schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                       | The designated teacher reflected on the use of the school-based PEP interview schedule, which he had trialled with another CiC.  
  
  Semi-structured interview carried out with the designated teacher to elicit his perceptions of the action research; in particular, to find out his reflections of the action research process; whether being involved in the action research had changed how he viewed the role of the EP and whether he could think of any ways that the school-based PEP interview schedule could be developed further.  
  
  I reflected on my interview with the designated teacher.  
  
  Findings from the action research were shared with the team manager for CiC and her reflections on the findings were sought. |
4.1.1: Stage 1 – Awareness of a need

Stage 1 of the RADIO approach refers to the identification of a need, out of which the possibility of research may arise. My contact with a key stakeholder in the LA resulted in the identification of a need for organisational working at secondary school level to develop school practice in relation to CiC.

The roots of the research grew out of a conversation with my supervisor at the LA where I was employed as a TEP. During a supervision session on 16.10.08, my supervisor asked me whether I had given any consideration to potential research topics for my forthcoming research project. I mentioned that I was interested in conducting research which would hopefully lead to better school experiences for CiC. I had noticed that although the literature regarding best practice in supporting the needs of CiC identified the potential protective value of positive school experiences for CiC; outcomes for CiC continue to remain a cause for concern, for example, as reflected in Government policies proposed in ‘Care Matters: Time for Change’ (DfES, 2007). I thus felt that there seemed to be a gap between what was known through the literature and what was being put into practice in schools. I wanted my research to demonstrate that EPs can have an important role in facilitating change in schools, by working with key staff to promote organisational change.

My interest coincided with a desire at LA level for research regarding the school experiences of CiC. My supervisor regularly sat on the local adoption and fostering panel, and through her involvement on the panel, she had elicited that the LA’s team manager for CiC had expressed an interest for research in this area. In particular, my supervisor understood that the team manager was keen for research linked to the experiences of CiC of secondary school age.

Having received this information, I contacted the team manager for CiC via telephone in order to arrange an initial meeting with her to discuss research ideas. It transpired that we both would be attending an LA professional development day about nurture on 11.11.08, so we agreed to meet informally after the meeting. Following our introductions, the team manager informed me about some of the research which had
been undertaken within the LA in recent years. The most recent piece of research conducted by an EP with regard to CiC, in 2006, involved analysis of outcome indicators for CiC within the LA. The team manager said that she would welcome research which involved the researcher working directly with staff in secondary schools, as she felt strongly that EPs’ psychological insights could be utilised effectively at organisational level to support teachers’ practice in working with CiC. She commented, ‘We already know a lot from the research what the young people need...but we need to find ways to reach staff to share our insights.’ She identified that schools provide an important support network for CiC, and thus she wanted the research to be a supportive, collaborative exercise between me and the school staff.

The team manager said that she did not have a specific research framework in mind. However, her desire for organisational work, alongside a collaborative approach to working with staff indicated that she had a preference for a type of inquiry that would done with staff, rather than to them. This alerted me to the possibility of action research; indeed the team manager’s ideas fit Herr and Anderson’s (2005) description of action research as, ‘...inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organisation...but never to or on them’ (p. 3). Certainly, action researchers themselves often emphasise the collaborative aspect of the approach (Eilertsen, Gustafson and Salo, 2008; Simm and Ingram, 2008). Seminars at university about methods of action research had led to my growing interest in this type of research, meaning that I was enthusiastic about the possibility of undertaking an action research project. In particular, as explained in the previous section, the RADIO approach appealed to me; thus I decided that I would use this approach to structure the research if stakeholders gave their agreement to this.

During my meeting with the team manager, she alerted me to a forthcoming training day in January 2009, which was to be run by her and the LA’s VSH primarily focused on the role of the corporate parent. She mentioned that it would be useful for us to meet again on that day as I could also meet the VSH. She told me that she worked very closely with him to support the needs of CiC and that they often planned training days together. She therefore felt that he would be keen to learn more about the proposed research as well as him being in a key position to be able to influence change at LA level. The LA’s Principal Educational Psychologist agreed that the day would be useful
as part of my continuing professional development (CPD) as well as for the purposes of my research.

In the months between meeting with the team manager on 11.11.08 and the training day on 28.01.09, I read around action research as well as the literature regarding CiC. On 28.01.09, at the end of the training day, I was introduced to the VSH by the team manager for CiC, and then the three of us had a meeting to discuss the proposed research. Prior to meeting with me, the team manager had informed the VSH about the discussion which had taken place on the last occasion I had met with her. The VSH told me that he agreed with the team manager that there was a need for research which involved the researcher working directly with secondary school staff, as he also felt that EPs’ psychological insights could be utilised effectively at organisational level to support teachers’ practice in working with CiC. I briefly talked about the main principles about action research, and how I felt that this type of research would lend itself to organisational school-based work. I mentioned that I had discussed the research with my university tutor, and we felt that taking into consideration the time constraints, it would be most appropriate for me to work with one secondary school. The team manager named a secondary school, which she felt would be a suitable choice in which to carry out the research. The full reasons for the choice of school are detailed later in this section. At the end of the meeting, the outcomes were that I would keep in touch with the team manager and VSH to update them on the research as it progressed, and that I would contact the head teacher of the identified secondary school.

When I returned home and reflected on the meeting, I decided that for my self-knowledge, I wanted to find out more information from the team manager and VSH. In my research diary, I listed key areas in which I would like to find out more information. These areas were: information about the role/responsibilities of the team manager and VSH; what they feel is working well within the LA or schools to support the needs of CiC; what the barriers are to supporting the needs of CiC within schools and what else they feel needs to be done to enable CiC to have more positive school experiences. I decided that individual semi-structured interviews would help me to
find out what the issues were at LA level. Although the research was to be carried out within a secondary school, I felt that I had established a link with the LA, and I wanted the views of the team manager for CiC and the VSH to be heard. I was also curious as to whether the views of the LA stakeholders about what they felt was working well in schools and what were the barriers to supporting CiC, would be shared by the school staff. I thus emailed the team manager for CiC and VSH, asking them whether they would give their permission to be interviewed on the areas identified above. As permission was received, a date was arranged for 20.07.09 for me to conduct the individual interviews.

The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Appendix E gives illustrations from each of the transcripts corresponding with each of the themes.

Thematic analysis drew out three main themes and nine sub-themes, as illustrated below:

**Figure 4.1: Main themes and sub-themes drawn out from semi-structured interviews with LA’s team manager for CiC and VSH**
Awareness-raising

One of the main themes drawn out of the preliminary interviews was awareness-raising. Under this main theme there were two sub-themes: 1) Levels of training and 2) Policies and legislation.

Levels of training

The LA’s team manager for CiC and VSH both identified that training was an important part of awareness-raising. The team manager referred directly to different levels of training, and the VSH alluded to this through sharing the different levels at which he worked at. As well as mentioning training regarding legislative matters, the team manager also identified the importance of training from a psychological perspective, mentioning some specific training which had been carried out by EPs. The VSH
recognised that training could be important in raising awareness of the financial resources available for CiC. He placed high emphasis on this, making reference to the usefulness of informing carers and designated teachers about packages of support available to CiC. The VSH identified that training for carers and designated teachers was his main area of priority. He spoke of not giving, ‘hard and fast rules’ but of giving advice. Unlike the team manager, he did not mention a specific role for EPs in delivering training. The VSH also talked about his role in raising awareness amongst senior staff in schools about the needs of CiC through delivering presentations to head teachers. He also spoke of his direct work with CiC, including giving school-age CiC opportunities to have residential experiences at universities. Although this is not ‘training’ in the true sense of the word, it is raising CiC’s awareness of future opportunities.

Policies and legislation

The LA’s team manager for CiC and VSH both acknowledged how policies and legislation have raised the profile of CiC within the LA. Both of the participants made direct reference to the Government’s new Ofsted regulations (Appendix E). The VSH gave specific examples of the resources available for CiC.

Sensitivity towards CiC

Under the theme of ‘Sensitivity towards CiC’ there were four sub-themes: 1) The role of schools, 2) Flexible, child-centred approach, 3) CiC’s self-image and confidence, and 4) Confidentiality.

The role of schools

Schools were identified as having a key role in supporting CiC, and the importance of school staff being sensitive towards CiC was highlighted. The team manager mentioned that having good pastoral systems in place in schools was important. She also cited an example of a school which had she felt had effectively supported a CiC, making reference to the school’s, ‘strong, established ethos’. The team manager indirectly identified a role for EPs in helping schools to support CiC, as she mentioned that
Nurture training can be helpful to schools, and this training is currently run by the EPS. The team manager and VSH both made reference to the importance of schools treating CiC in positive ways. The VSH referred to, ‘high expectations’ and the team manager gave an example of a CiC who prospered at a school, which she attributed to the way that he was treated within school; for example, through treating the CiC for, ‘himself’; staff giving him responsibilities. The team manager and VSH also mentioned the importance of staff taking a sensitive approach towards CiC. When the team manager gave the example of the CiC who prospered at school, she also mentioned that the staff knew about the pupil’s, ‘emotional vulnerabilities’. The team manager spoke of how he raised awareness of the needs of CiC through delivering training to head teachers; however, he commented, ‘...the real people who can make a difference are the designated teachers because they work with the kids on a day-to-day basis.’

Thematic analysis highlighted that although both the team manager and VSH identified schools as important in supporting CiC, the team manager seemed to place more emphasis on more general aspects of the school such as ethos, whilst the VSH spoke specifically of the importance of key individuals such as head teachers and designated teachers.

**Flexible, child-centred approach**

Both the team manager and VSH placed emphasis on seeking the views of CiC when decisions are made regarding how to support them, and of being responsive to the CiC’s needs. The team manager made reference to an, ‘individual sensitive approach’, where there is, ‘flexibility of protocols, criteria and principles’. The VSH spoke of the importance of CiC feeling that they are being listened to by professionals. However, he also raised the issue that CiC do not want to feel that they are treated differently to their peers; thus any support offered to them at school should be discreet.

**CiC’s self-image and confidence**

The team manager and VSH made reference to the CiC’s past and/or ongoing circumstances and the impact that these circumstances have on CiC’s self-image and confidence. The team manager referred to, ‘...emotional pressure within [CiC’s] families’ and the VSH referred to, ‘...the trauma [CiC have] experienced in terms of
them going into care’. Both of the interviewees made reference to placement breakdowns, and the insecurity and lack of confidence which can occur for CiC as a result of these breakdowns. The VSH expressed his view that some CiC’s lack of confidence may be holding them back in that they may perceive themselves as individuals who are, ‘...not successful and... never can be successful’.

Confidentiality

The team manager and VSH both made reference to the importance of sensitivity regarding issues of confidentiality related to CiC’s ‘in care’ status. Both interviewees made the point that many CiC do not want others to know about their ‘in care’ status. The team manager and VSH also made reference to complex issues related to maintaining a CiC’s desire for confidentiality; for example, the VSH made the point that it may be necessary for a teacher to know about a pupil’s ‘in care’ status so that they can offer, ‘extra support’ to the pupil. The team manager suggested ways around referring directly to a pupil’s ‘in care’ status by talking in terms of his/her vulnerability with staff.

Barriers to supporting CiC

Three sub-themes were identified under this theme: 1) Circumstantial factors, 2) Differing priorities and agendas, and 3) Attitudes of CiC and of other people.

Circumstantial factors

The team manager and VSH both identified that circumstances outside of the control of CiC were barriers to supporting them. For example, they both referred to changes of placements. The VSH also made reference to the potential impact on a CiC if a transfer of schools happened as a result of a placement breakdown.

Differing priorities and agendas

Both the team manager and VSH made reference to differing priorities and agendas being potential barriers to supporting the needs of CiC. The team manager referred more generally to the risk of CiC, ‘...fall[ing] between the gaps of protocols, criteria and
priorities’, while the VSH made direct reference to issues related to multi-agency working; specifically, differing agendas and time constraints. The VSH also raised the issue that some carers, ‘…don’t actually give the support in terms of education that they need [to CiC]’, although he attributed this to carers not being a position to do so (‘I understand that around about 50% of carers do not have any academic qualifications themselves’), rather than through lack of eagerness.

**Attitudes of CiC and of other people**

The team manager and VSH both acknowledged that stereotypes shown through people’s attitudes towards CiC persist and act as a barrier to supporting the CiC’s needs. The team manager gave direct examples; ‘There definitely are people who stick with an attitude of, ‘You’re in care; you mean trouble.’’ The VSH spoke directly of the need to break down people’s stereotypes that surround CiC.

The VSH also referred to, ‘…barriers [which] can be from the children’s own eyes…Some of them believe that they’re not successful and…that they can never be successful.’

**Reflections on interviews**

The interviews enabled me to gain some insight into what the priorities regarding CiC were at LA level, as well as what the LA stakeholders perceived to be the barriers to meeting the needs of CiC. Thematic analysis allowed me to understand the constructions of the LA stakeholders as to what they perceive the issues for CiC to be. These interviews were, I felt, an important preliminary step before I began the action research in the school; important for my own self-knowledge and to reflect upon when working with staff in the secondary school.

On the day of my meeting with the team manager and VSH, I also took the opportunity to share with them the stages and characteristics of the RADIO approach (Appendix F). I explained my reasons as to why I felt that it may be an appropriate framework to follow. The team manager and VSH were given the opportunity to ask questions about the RADIO approach.
Preparing the groundwork – Rationale for choosing a school

Bello (2006) has asserted that choosing a school for a collaborative action research project is an important preliminary phase, which the literature on action research has so far paid little attention to. Stake (1998) has suggested that a school may be selected by a researcher for several reasons, including because the school has an established tradition regarding innovative activities; because the specific aspect that the study wishes to focus on is taught there; because the researcher believes that the school will enable the researcher to obtain a lot of new knowledge; because different educational programmes are being undertaken there; because the researcher feels that the research will be well-received and because of the school’s location. However, it is not a one-way decision made by the researcher; the school has to agree to the researcher’s presence (Stake, ibid.).

The secondary school in which I worked collaboratively with staff was recommended to me by the team manager for CiC for the LA during our meeting on 11.11.08 because she identified that the school had higher than average numbers of CiC (4% of the school population), compared with other secondary schools in the LA. The team manager knew the head teacher as she had met with him through her role within the LA, and she felt that he would be keen for the school to be involved in the research. The school also met certain characteristics which I felt were important; strong encouragement of parents within school life had been acknowledged by the most recent Ofsted report in 2006, as well as the assertion that the head teacher shows, ‘...highly effective leadership’ (Ofsted, 2006, p. 3) and that the senior management team demonstrates high levels of commitment and work very well together as a team. In the Ofsted report (ibid., p. 2), the school was described as an, ‘...outstanding school’. It was also described as, ‘...a self-evaluating school that knows where its strengths and areas for development lie’ (Ofsted, ibid., p. 3). Pupil exclusions were deemed by Ofsted (ibid., p. 4) to be ‘rare’.

The school is a smaller than average secondary school. The pupils join the school from over twenty primary schools in the area. At the time of the research project, there
were 650 pupils on the school roll. It is a non-selective school, over-subscribed, with a stable number of pupils on the school roll and a similar proportion of male and female pupils. Approximately 90% of the pupils are of White British heritage, with the remaining 10% of mainly Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage. The age range of pupils is, at the time of writing, between 11 and 16 years old; however, in September 2010, a Sixth Form Centre will allow for pupils to stay on at the school to continue their education. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, including those pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The school has been awarded a range of awards including Leading Edge School, Investor in People, Listening School and Healthy School.

I was an outsider to the school in the respect that I had not worked at the school previously. This seemed important to me; I felt that entering the school as a researcher would make it more likely that staff would talk in depth about issues related to CiC, without feeling that I knew about the issues already. If the school had, for example, been one of my allocated schools to work in as a TEP, it is possible that the information that I obtained would have been less detailed. Another advantage of being an outsider to the school was that I felt that it enabled staff to talk openly about their concerns; they may have been less open about their concerns if they already had an established, ongoing professional relationship with me. Being an outsider also meant that there were perhaps not the same difficulties regarding workload which could have arisen if I was the named TEP for the school; for example, if I had have been the school’s TEP, it might have been difficult to maintain the distinction between my work as a TEP and my work as a researcher.

However, there were potential disadvantages to me being an outsider to the school. At times it was difficult to make contact with key stakeholders at the school. If I had been the school’s TEP and thus had a pre-existing relationship with staff, it is possible that this would have been less difficult. Further, although I was able to feedback to the school’s named EP about the research and consult with him about possible next steps in supporting the school, his depth of understanding about the research could not be as deep as it would have been if he had carried out the research himself or worked in
collaboration with me. However, as the EP had previously assumed a more traditional EP role within the school involving individual casework and staff training, the research alerted him to the potential benefits of action research.

4.1.2: Stage 2 – Invitation to act

During this stage of the RADIO approach, a researcher contacts research stakeholders in a position to approve and resource the research role and negotiates their role. Therefore, at this stage of the RADIO approach, I contacted the head teacher at the school who was in a position to approve and resource the research role and negotiated my role in the research as well as his role and the possible role(s) of other members of staff.

My initial contact with the school was through a letter dated 8.06.09, which I addressed to the head teacher of the school, detailing the nature and purpose of the research, and requesting permission to carry out the research at the school (Appendix B). The letter indicated that I would be making further contact at a later date. Over a week after I had sent the letter, I made a follow-up phone call to the head teacher on 18.06.09, in order to discuss the research further. However, the head teacher informed me that he had not received the letter. He asked whether I would email him a copy of the letter, and said that from my description of the research project he was, ‘very interested’ in the school being involved in it. Although improving outcomes for CiC had not been highlighted on the current school improvement plan (SIP) as an area of priority, the head teacher identified that the school had a relatively high percentage of CiC, which was a reason for his interest in the research. Without this interest from the head teacher, it is possible that this piece of research would never have taken place at the school. Indeed, Sutoris (2000) has referred to the,

‘...crucial importance of the leadership of the head teacher in creating conditions within the school that enable other members of the system to take up their respective roles’ (p. 57).
Although Sutoris (2000) was referring to the importance of the leadership of the head teacher specifically in relation to policies, plans and subsystems within school, I feel that this could also extend to creating conditions which allow for research to take place. Certainly, as well as making reference to the relatively high numbers of CiC at the school, the head teacher also said that he was always open to opportunities for research to be carried out at school because he and his staff recognised the benefits of research in developing their practice. The fact that the head teacher alluded to previous pieces of research being carried out in school was important; Simons (2002) has suggested that it is easier to negotiate access to a school when it is already used to having visits from researchers.

The head teacher said that once he had read the letter, he would pass it onto the deputy head teacher, who had responsibility for overseeing the practices used to support CiC in school, as he felt that she would be the most appropriate key person in school for me to liaise with. He said that it was likely that he would not be taking an active role in the research, but that he would give his support to the project and would be interested in outcomes from the research. He suggested that I make telephone contact with the deputy head teacher over the next couple of weeks, once she’d had the chance to read the letter. From the week beginning 29.06.09, I tried to make telephone contact with the deputy head. There were complications around this; we seemed to miss each other’s calls and the deputy head was away on a school trip during one of the weeks that I tried to contact her. On 9.07.09, contact was made. The deputy head told me that she had read the letter and she was keen to be involved in the research. The deputy head teacher suggested having a meeting where we could discuss the research in more detail and clarify any organisational issues which may support or hinder the research. A date for this meeting was arranged for 20.07.09.

4.1.3: Stage 3 – Clarifying organisational and cultural issues

This stage of the RADIO approach involves the researcher carrying out an initial exploration of organisational or cultural factors likely to support or impede the
initiative. Thus, at the meeting with the deputy head teacher on 20.07.09, we discussed the scope and scale of the research.

Before the meeting I had prepared an agenda: to introduce myself and ask about the deputy teacher’s responsibilities with regard to CiC in school; to find out what her key priorities were with regard to supporting the CiC; to talk about action research and the RADIO approach and to negotiate next steps. I provided the deputy head teacher with a table depicting the stages and characteristics of the RADIO approach (Appendix F). I talked through the table with the deputy head teacher, giving her opportunities to ask questions or seek clarification. She seemed to like the clear structure of the approach. We discussed initial factors likely to support or impede the research, as well as ethical issues around confidentiality regarding pupils. It was agreed that because the action research would involve me working with staff and not pupils, that I would not be given any details about pupils in the school, which would make them identifiable, unless consent had been obtained. If a staff member wished to make reference to any pupil during conversation with me, they would be referred to using a code; for example ‘Pupil A’. If during the research it was deemed appropriate for me to do individual or group work with any pupil(s), it was agreed that a letter detailing my proposed involvement would be sent to each pupil as well as his/her parent or carer, including a consent form, which would require the pupil’s signature as well as the pupil’s parent/carers signature.

The deputy head teacher had been on a full-term secondment to the LA during the previous two academic years, working as an Inclusion Advisor and she had returned to her deputy head teacher post full-time at the start of Spring Term 2009. As part of her role as Inclusion Advisor, the deputy head teacher had delivered training at conferences arranged by the LA, about developing children and young people’s resilience and risk and protective factors regarding resiliency. She informed me that resiliency-based approaches to supporting pupils appealed to her, as well as strengths-based approaches. She reported that school staff, ‘...try to take positive approaches’ to supporting children and stated that ‘...on the rare occasions that a pupil is excluded, I feel that we, as a school, have failed.’
During our conversation, it transpired that the number of CiC attending the school had fallen considerably since November 2008, when it had been identified by the LA’s team manager for CiC as a school which had above average numbers of CiC, compared with other schools within the LA. In November 2008, there were seventeen CiC on roll, which was 4% of the school population; however, by end of July 2009, the number on roll was four. I was told that the reason for this was because many of the CiC were in Year 11, and thus having completed their GCSEs, they were no longer on the school’s roll. There was no Sixth Form provision at the school at the time of carrying out the research. The recruitment of a different school was not possible due to time constraints, as well as access.

During my meeting with her, the deputy head teacher and I negotiated time in-school for the research. Ideally, I would have liked to plan for fortnightly visits to school to meet with a focus group of interested staff members, including the school’s designated teacher for CiC. This would have allowed me to hear the perspectives of a wider number of staff in the time available for the research. However, the deputy head teacher felt that not only might there be difficulties in getting staff’s diaries to coordinate and in freeing up staff’s time for meetings, but there was a risk that confidentiality could be breached during meetings regarding which pupils in the school were ‘in care’. We agreed therefore that it would be more appropriate for me to select a key person in school to work with, who would be in the best position to bring about change, and then negotiate dates and times for meetings with that person.

It was agreed that the school’s designated teacher for CiC would be the most appropriate person for me to work the closest with. Although the deputy head teacher was very interested in the research and was happy to have involvement in it, she acknowledged that there were heavy demands on her time because of her many responsibilities within school. She felt that for this reason, she could not offer the same level of commitment to the research that the designated teacher might be able to. Further, she felt that the designated teacher, because of his role in school, was the most appropriate key person for me to work with.
4.1.4: Stage 4 – Identifying stakeholders in area of need

At stage 4 of the RADIO approach, it is helpful to identify major stakeholders and agree processes for collaborating with stakeholders for feedback and discussion e.g. co-ordinating group and initiative co-ordinator. Major stakeholders in the research were the secondary school’s designated teacher for CiC and the deputy head teacher. The LA’s team manager for CiC and the VSH for CiC were major stakeholders from the LA, and the outcomes of the action research were fed back to them; however, they were not involved directly with the research which took place within the secondary school.

On the day of my visit to the secondary school on 20.07.09, having agreed with the deputy head teacher that the designated teacher would be an appropriate choice of key person for me to work with in school; the intention was for me to meet briefly with the designated teacher on that day. However, he was not available in school on the day of my visit. The deputy head teacher said that she would meet with him to discuss the outcome of our meeting, prior to me meeting with him. During my meeting with the deputy head teacher it was also agreed that I would facilitate meetings, but there would be no lead group member in the sense that meetings would be collaborative. I agreed that I would make notes during meetings and an agreed action plan would be produced at the end of meetings. It was decided that meetings would not be digitally recorded, as the purpose of them was to produce an action plan, rather than to analyse the content of discussions. These processes were also discussed and agreed with the designated teacher, during my initial meeting with him on 22.10.09.

4.1.5: Stage 5 – Agreeing focus of concern (research aims)

At this stage of the RADIO approach, research aims and purposes are identified.

From my discussion with the deputy head teacher and latterly with the designated teacher, it was agreed that the focus of concern would be to use a resiliency approach to bring about positive change in the school experiences for CiC in school. It was decided that the current ways of supporting CiC’s resiliency in school would be looked at, and suggestions for improvement would be discussed. The designated teacher
expressed an interest in producing a school-based PEP interview schedule for CiC; the reasons for his interest in this area will be explained during Stage 9 of the results section. As the facilitator of the action research, I wanted the stakeholders to have as much ownership over the research as possible. I knew that for this to happen, the research issue needed to be of high interest to staff at the school. Hopkins (1989) feels that the issue being of interest to staff, as well as being concrete and the study viable, are the criteria which should be taken into account when the research issue is chosen.

4.1.6: Stage 6 - Negotiating framework for information gathering

During this stage of the RADIO approach, a framework for information gathering was negotiated with stakeholders. This included issues and decisions regarding methodology, methods, resources and timescales. Key variables to be measured were also decided. Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly (2003) state that a suitable methodology should be selected in order to address the research aims, and thus the organisation’s development needs.

As mentioned in ‘Stage 3 – Clarifying organisational and cultural issues’, the RADIO approach had been offered to the deputy head teacher as the framework within which to carry out the research, as I felt that this approach would promote collaborative working, as well as support stakeholders’ professional development. The flexibility of the approach, which allows for a range of data collection methods to be used in order to meet the requirements of the research brief also appealed to me. The deputy teacher agreed to the use of the RADIO approach, as did the designated teacher when the approach was shared with him. It was agreed that the research would take place over eight months, beginning in July 2009 and ending in February 2010. It was agreed that dates of meetings would be organised as deemed appropriate and contact would also be maintained through email and phone calls. As it was not possible to carry out focus group meetings, as detailed in section 3.12, it was therefore agreed that following my meeting with the deputy head teacher, I would work primarily with the designated teacher.
4.1.7: Stage 7 – Gathering information

At this stage of the RADIO approach, information is collected through agreed methods. As will be explained in this section, SIMS data was collected linked to factors associated with resiliency.

Resiliency was highlighted to me as an area of interest to the key stakeholders within school. The deputy head teacher spoke of the difficulties in measuring resiliency, but expressed her view that there are, ‘...huge benefits to taking an approach based on resiliency. The focus is not on getting caught up in problems, but on moving forwards and working on promoting pupils’ strengths.’ We both had background knowledge about resiliency factors. From my reading I had identified four main factors which the literature suggests can bring about positive change in the school experiences for CiC. These factors were shared with the deputy head teacher who was in agreement that they seemed to be the most important factors. The factors identified were as follows:

(i) The importance of being valued by teachers;
(ii) Providing CiC with a flexible and planned approach for educational support, involving other agencies;
(iii) Close links between school and home;
(iv) CiC feeling a sense of safety, identity and belonging at school e.g. through having set routines, joining after-school and lunchtime clubs, receiving positive recognition and forming close peer relationships.

We discussed what mechanisms were in place in school for obtaining how each of these factors affected CiC. Linked to factors 1 and 4, the deputy head teacher referred to the school’s ethos, which she described as, ‘nurturing and supportive’. As the school is relatively small for a secondary school, she felt that it was perhaps better able to provide pupils with a, ‘sense of community’ than a larger school might be able to, as, ‘it means [the smaller size] that it’s easier to get to know more of the pupils’. She told me that pupils were awarded achievement points by staff for good efforts with work and/or behaviour. She mentioned some extra-curricular clubs offered through school, which pupils can access. Referring to factor 2, the deputy head teacher mentioned
IEPs, Achievement Support Plans and PEPs which she said were regularly reviewed. Following the official guidance, the PEPs are initiated by the social worker and are usually completed in school with the designated teacher at a meeting which the CiC attends. Thus, with regard to factor 2; when educational support is planned for CiC, it does involve an external agency. In terms of factor 3, the deputy head teacher referred to annual parents’ evenings. She also said that there was particular emphasis on maintaining regular informal contacts with social workers and carers for CiC.

The discussion was interesting and it was helpful for me to obtain some background information regarding incentives and support linked to resiliency factors on offer to pupils at the school. I asked the deputy head teacher whether there was anywhere specific in school where this information was stored. She said that data for all pupils was stored electronically on SIMS.

Although the deputy head teacher had identified SIMS as a possible starting part for investigating how resiliency factors linked to school experiences affected the CiC, we also considered other options. For example, we discussed whether it would be beneficial to devise a questionnaire to elicit the views of staff and pupils about resiliency factors linked to CiC’s school experiences and/or carry out individual interviews with staff and pupils. However, we felt that because of issues of confidentiality regarding CiC’s ‘in care’ status, it would be difficult for staff to comment on these factors in relation to CiC if individual pupils were not identifiable. Further, we felt that at this stage in the process, the purpose was to investigate what existing mechanisms were in place at the school through which the four factors linked to promoting resiliency for CiC could be investigated.

SIMS offered us a quick way in to establish a dialogue about how CiC were supported in school, which was particularly important because I had not worked in the school prior to the research, so I had limited information about this.

The rationale for using SIMS data therefore was formed through making a collaborative decision to use school’s existing data to investigate how successfully it could be linked to the four resiliency factors, which the literature suggests can bring about positive change in CiC’s school experiences.
This decision led to discussion between us as to how information collected on SIMS could be linked to the four identified resiliency factors. We felt that information about CiC’s attendance could be linked to their sense of feeling valued at school and feeling a sense of belonging (factors 1 and 4); information about CiC’s achievement points and number of behavioural incidents could be linked again, either positively or negatively, to factor 1 (a sense of being valued by teachers) and factor 4 (CiC feeling a sense of safety, identity and belonging at school through receiving positive recognition). We felt that it would also be interesting to look at SIMS data to compare the educational attainments of CiC compared to their peers, as the literature points to generally lower educational attainment for the majority of CiC compared to other children/young people. We were interested to see whether the same trend would be noted through analysis of the school’s SIMS data.

We could not link any information collected on SIMS with factor 2; that is, providing children with a flexible and planned approach for educational support, involving other agencies. However, the deputy head teacher said that there is regular contact with CiC’s social workers, foster carers etc, usually initiated by the designated teacher, so she felt that other agencies were involved as far as possible. She said that the school tried to be as flexible as possible in supporting CiC, whilst being sensitive to the fact that CiC often did not want to be seen as being treated differently to their peers. She did, however, see a role for me in supporting the school to develop new flexible approaches for supporting CiC.

With regard to factor 3 (close links between home and school), the deputy head teacher identified that although she felt, in general, that links between home and school in the school community were strong, there would always be the issue that some parents and carers are harder to reach than others. I asked whether there was an electronic system for recording whether or not parents or carers attended parents’ evenings. The deputy head teacher said that there was not, which led us to discuss the pros and cons of having a system for recording this information. The deputy head teacher also told me that there were no electronic records of pupils’ involvement in extra-curricular clubs organised through school, so the advantages and practicalities of establishing and maintaining an electronic system for the recording of this information
was discussed. We agreed that if SIMS or another electronic means of recording information was not available to hold data linked to any of the chosen areas, then other means of data collection e.g. information hand recorded in lists, may be beneficial.

In order to look at the SIMS data in more detail, it was agreed that anonymised SIMS data for the four CiC in school would be collected. In addition, the same SIMS data was collected for four non-CiC. All of the pupils were male. The comparison pupils were selected by collecting the same SIMS data for a child of the same gender who was next in position in the register to each CiC, according to date of birth. Therefore, SIMS data was collected for eight pupils in total, as shown in the table below. Due to the relatively small number of children, it was thus not possible to carry out inferential statistical analysis of the SIMS data. It is generally agreed that a sample size of at least thirty is required to analyse data statistically (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

Table 4.2: SIMS data for CiC and non-CiC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil</th>
<th>Year group (as of July 2009)</th>
<th>Attainment rank/135*</th>
<th>Achievement points</th>
<th>Number of recorded behavioural incidents</th>
<th>Attendance %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CiC A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-CiC A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>98.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CiC B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-CiC B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CiC C</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-CiC C</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Average number of pupils in a year group is 135. Attainment ranks are calculated by ordering pupils according to their overall scoring obtained from core national curriculum tests. Achievement points are awarded to pupils by teachers, at their discretion, for positive efforts or achievements that pupils make within school.

The deputy head teacher obtained the anonymised information from SIMS and emailed it to me on 22.07.09, which was at the start of the summer break. We agreed to meet on 21.09.09 at the start of the new term, to share our reflections on the data.

4.1.8: Stage 8 – Processing information with research sponsors/stakeholders

At this stage of the RADIO approach, research findings are shared and their implications are discussed with research stakeholders. Thus, on 21.09.09, I met with the deputy head teacher to discuss the SIMS data. I noted down our observations, which were recorded in the research diary. We both remarked that the attendance percentage figures overall for CiC were pleasing, and were similar to the percentages for non-CiC. The deputy head teacher noticed that all of the CiC were positioned lower down the attainment rank than the comparison non-CiC. However, she felt that this information did not provide us with a full picture in that the children’s cognitive abilities had not been considered. The deputy head teacher suggested that if a child’s cognitive abilities were lower than another child’s cognitive abilities, then it would be expected that their place in the attainment rank would also be lower.

The deputy head teacher was able to obtain the mean scores that each of the pupils obtained in the cognitive abilities test (CAT), which they had taken in school when they were in the autumn term of Year 7. CATs assess a range of pupils’ reasoning skills. This
information, as seen below, shows that each of the CiC achieved a lower mean CAT score than the comparison non-CiC, as the deputy head teacher had suggested. Thus, each of the non-CiC obtained higher cognitive scores than the CiC and had a higher attainment ranking than them. However, that is not to say that CAT scores should therefore always be taken at face value as a predictor of pupils’ future attainments. Factors such as the test being taken when pupils are in Year 7 and relatively new to the school, may impact on how comfortable they feel during the assessment, which in turn may affect outcomes. If a pupil was experiencing difficult personal circumstances at the time of assessment, again, this may affect their performance. In short, as with many tests, because a CAT measures a pupil’s performance on a particular day, there are many factors which can impact on performance.

Table 4.3: Mean CAT scores and attainment ranks for CiC and non-CiC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil</th>
<th>Year group (as of July 2009)</th>
<th>Mean CAT score</th>
<th>Attainment rank/135</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CiC A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-CiC A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CiC B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-CiC B</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CiC C</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-CiC C</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CiC D</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-CiC D</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another observation made by the deputy head teacher was that the number of recorded achievement points that each of the pupils in Year 7 obtained were much higher than the number of achievement points recorded for pupils in different year groups. From our discussions, we came to the shared opinion that the likely reason for this was because pupils in Year 7 were more likely to approach the relevant staff in school to ask them to record their awarded achievement points.

The deputy head teacher said that SIMS, ‘has benefits’ in terms of being of a means of identifying in which areas of schooling pupils would benefit from additional support in, but that one of the challenges for staff is keeping SIMS up-to-date. Schools are increasingly being held accountable for pupils’ progress through statistical evidence, thus it is important that there is clarity amongst staff regarding who has responsibility for doing this.

The SIMS data was also shared with the designated teacher on 22.10.09. He made similar observations to the deputy head teacher, concluding that although SIMS data can be useful to reflect upon in general terms linked to outcomes for CiC; it would be too simplistic to make generalisations about CiC based on the data.

As it was my first meeting with the designated teacher, I wanted to find out about his role in school. It was important to me that the designated teacher felt listened to and valued. In order to promote equality and the sharing of power (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006) I wanted the designated teacher to feel that I regarded him as a person of equal power in the action research process who brought his own expertise. He described his links with social workers and carers as, ‘good’, commenting that he had regular phone contact with them and that there were, ‘open lines of communication’. He also gave me general information about practices within school to support pupils, such as induction procedures, which I found very useful because it gave me insight into the general ethos of the school. In my research diary I have noted that the designated teacher spoke of the importance of, ‘community’ and, ‘belonging’ for pupils. One of my living values is inclusion and it was encouraging to me that the designated teacher seemed to espouse that same value. Similarly the designated teacher talked about the importance of adopting a child-centred approach when meeting with CiC and of taking
a personalised approach to supporting their needs. He seemed attuned to the children/young people’s needs. This seemed to connect well with my own values of care and compassion.

The designated teacher identified that there was a barrier to supporting CiC’s needs linked to confidentiality as few staff were aware of the CiC’s ‘in care’ status. The designated teacher identified that this could sometimes lead to difficulties in school as staff were not always aware of issues related to being in care for particular children/young people. He acknowledged that this sometimes impacted on the amount of general support which CiC received in school. Confidentiality was the main barrier he raised; an issue which had also been raised by the team manager for CiC and the VSH.

**4.1.9: Stage 9 – Agreeing areas for future action**

At this stage of the RADIO approach, the findings are discussed in relation to the organisation’s needs and areas for action are identified. The SIMS data therefore provided a basis for this discussion, which led to agreement with the designated teacher that I would work collaboratively with him to create a school-based PEP interview schedule.

Reflecting on the collection of SIMS data, doing this was helpful in the respect that it provided an interesting talking point, and raised issues regarding the systems available for recording information. It also highlighted the importance of looking at CiC as individuals; I noticed that when the deputy head teacher and designated teacher were reflecting on the SIMS data, they referred to individual CiC, rather than to the CiC as a group. They did not make comparisons between the data for CiC and the non-CiC, which was positive in the respect that it suggested to me that their focus was very much on looking at individual CiC’s needs and circumstances. It was recognised that personal circumstances may influence aspects such as the number of behavioural incidents occurring within school.
It should also be noted only SIMS data for male pupils was collected. If there had been female CiC at the school, it would have been interesting to see whether differences would have noticed between individual female pupils and between the sexes.

It could be argued that collecting information related to the number of reported behavioural incidents does not provide us with a clear picture of what actually constitutes a ‘behavioural incident’, nor does it help staff to identify possible triggers for pupils, in that SIMS data does not have specific categories. It may be that ‘acting out’ behaviours such as fighting are more readily recorded by teachers than undesirable behaviours which pupils may engage in more discreetly, such as name-calling. Further, some staff may record incidents on SIMS more consistently and/or abundantly than other staff. There is also a concern that too much focus may be placed on consequences for pupils when behavioural incidents occur, rather than addressing what may lie at the root of incidents. However, even if staff do make attempts to address the root of CiC’s behaviour through looking at SIMS data related to behavioural incidents, this only provides a small part of the picture. For example, some CiC with issues such as anxiety and/or depression may not present with obvious external behaviours at school. As mentioned in my literature review, this could explain why one piece of research found that 12% of teachers thought that CiC had emotional problems (anxiety and depression), compared to 45% of foster carers who thought this (Minnis and Devine, 2001).

We all were in agreement that although SIMS data can be useful to reflect upon in general terms linked to resiliency and outcomes for CiC; the complexity of the needs for CiC arising from issues related to being in care, as well as, for older children, issues related to adolescence, means that it is too simplistic to make generalisations. For this reason we also felt that statistical analysis, even with a larger sample size, would not be particularly helpful. SIMS data can however be useful in alerting staff to potential issues for individual CiC; for example, the deputy head teacher and designated teacher were able to identify that a pupil who had a relatively high number of behavioural incidents recorded over the past few months had recently changed placements. SIMS data could therefore be used as a means of alerting staff to the possibility that a CiC’s circumstances may be impacting on their emotional well-being and behaviour within
school. Rather than focusing on the number of behavioural incidents, it seems more important to monitor patterns and to try and get to the root of what may be the cause of them. This would, however, require a commitment to regular monitoring of SIMS data and interpretation of it. SIMS data can also be used as a means through which staff can notice children/young people’s efforts in key areas and then offer praise accordingly.

The designated teacher therefore felt, like me, that global statistics (i.e. SIMS) were not very informative in this instance and that a more individualised picture of CiC’s needs was required. However, he felt that it would be beneficial if it was possible to take the resiliency factors, which had been investigated through the SIMS data and incorporate these factors into a mechanism through which he could obtain an individualised picture of CiC’s needs. He said that sometimes his meetings with CiC could be difficult in the respect that, ‘They’re not always comfortable articulating what their difficulties or concerns about school are’ and he also commented that, ‘Some pupils find it difficult to answer certain questions...some of them will ‘go into themselves’ if they’re asked an open question.’ We discussed how these difficulties impact on the support offered to pupils. As the designated teacher commented, ‘If we’re not aware of what their [CiC’s] needs are, then that’s obviously a barrier...the more we know about what’s concerning them, the more we can work together to help them.’ Sensitive and creative ways of eliciting information from CiC therefore seemed to be a priority for the designated teacher.

The designated teacher said that it would be useful for us to work together to devise a pro-forma through which a, ‘full picture’ of CiC’s views about their school experiences could be elicited. He referred to the LA’s PEP, which is accessed online and he briefly showed me it. Consistent with Hayden’s (2005) overall findings from her research in one local authority, the designated teacher was critical of the specific design and content of the LA’s PEP. He said that another issue he had found with the LA’s PEP was that it is, ‘...too open ended for some of the pupils...you’ll ask them a
question and they’ll just say, ‘I don’t know.’” The designated teacher explained that consistent with Government guidance, the LA’s PEPs are triggered by the CiC’s social workers and are completed in school with him at a meeting that includes the pupil. The designated teacher felt that there was a need for a school-based PEP, which school could have ownership of, which would be, ‘...focused on a school point of view, looking at relationships with staff and pupils...things more like that, very specific to school.’

Thus, the designated teacher wanted to work collaboratively with me to devise a school-based PEP, which could be used in his meetings with CiC and which would be, ‘pupil friendly’. It was agreed that our future action would involve collaborative working to create the school-based PEP, which could be used as a basis for conversations between the designated teacher and CiC. We thus decided that it would take the form of an interview schedule. Although the word ‘interview’ may suggest a power imbalance, it was not chosen with the idea of a formal interview in mind. Rather, our aim was that the interview schedule would provide an exploratory structure through which the designated teacher could obtain CiC’s opinions of their school experiences.

I recognised that because the designated teacher had suggested that we develop a school-based PEP interview schedule, he would be likely to have greater ownership over it than if I had made the suggestion to create one. This was important to me; as stated previously, research suggests for the most successful changes to occur, the adults involved in working closely with children need to feel a sense of ownership over situations (Dowd and Thorne, 2007).

The designated teacher also shared my interest in resiliency approaches. He acknowledged that he did not know as much about resilience theory as the deputy head teacher and I did but he was keen to learn more about it. I therefore spent time with him sharing information from the literature about resiliency, particularly about sources of evidence linked to promoting resilience for CiC (for example, Gilligan, 2000; Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999). I feel that this process enabled the designated teacher to reflect on his own practice and on general practices within school. From the
information that the designated teacher shared, I felt that promoting resiliency for CiC was already implicit within school but was intuitive rather than theoretically driven.

The designated teacher saw value in incorporating the factors which we had attempted to investigate through SIMS data into the school-based PEP interview schedule. It was therefore agreed that the school-based PEP interview schedule would address the four resiliency factors which as suggested by the literature can bring about positive change in the school experiences for CiC. As mentioned previously, these factors are:

(i) The importance of being valued by teachers;

(ii) Providing CiC with a flexible and planned approach for educational support, involving other agencies;

(iii) Close links between school and home;

(iv) CiC feeling a sense of safety, identity and belonging at school e.g. through having set routines, joining after-school and lunchtime clubs, receiving positive recognition and forming close peer relationships.

We looked at each of the factors in turn so that we could agree which broad areas we would cover in the school-based PEP interview schedule.

Firstly, we agreed that a broad area covering issues related to teachers could be included and linked to factor 1 as well as to factor 4 (in the sense that teachers can provide pupils with positive recognition).

Reflecting on factor 2, it was decided that it was difficult to cover this factor in detail in the school-based PEP interview schedule because the responsibility for communication between agencies should lie with the adults who are supporting CiC. However, we felt that asking the pupils general questions related to their learning and about general issues such as attendance, behaviour and positive recognition, would provide information which could be used to help the designated teacher to think about the individualised educational support which a CiC may need.
Regarding factor 3, it was decided that we would include a question regarding home-school communication. It was agreed that this question would be incorporated into the broad section related to learning and general issues.

To address factor 4, we agreed on two broad areas to cover in the school-based PEP interview schedule related to extra-curricular activities and friendships. We felt that having set routines was a natural part of the structure of the school day and so it was agreed that this issue would not be directly covered.

Thus, it was provisionally agreed that the school-based PEP interview schedule would cover the following areas: teachers; school work/general; extra-curricular activities and friendships. We agreed that the order in which the areas would be covered in the interview schedule would be as follows: friendships; teachers; school work/general and extra-curricular activities. Although we acknowledged that there was no single ‘correct way’ in terms of the order in which the areas were covered, we felt that in general it was likely that pupils would feel more comfortable talking about friendships as a starting point, rather than about their relationship with teachers.

Before our next meeting on 8.12.09 the designated teacher and I agreed that we would think about specific issues/questions to cover in the school-based PEP interview schedule related to the broad areas we had identified. These issues/questions would then be discussed further during the meeting.

Stemming from the previous stage of the RADIO approach, the designated teacher and I also discussed further issues related to organisational development and improvement. The designated teacher said that he felt there may be a role for me in delivering training or group work to staff about risk and resiliency principles for young people or in facilitating discussion amongst staff about risk and resiliency. It was therefore agreed that before my next visit to school, he would approach key members of pastoral staff to see whether there was interest from them, and time available, for me to carry out this work.
A week after our meeting, I emailed the designated teacher the brief notes I had made from our meeting and the agreed actions (Appendix G), which were to be discussed again in more detail during our next meeting.

4.1.10: Stage 10 – Action planning

This stage of the RADIO approach relates to action planning, which is stakeholder-led. This section of the research will show how the actions agreed at Stage 9 of the RADIO approach were planned for.

When I returned to school on 8.12.09, the agreed actions from the previous meeting were addressed in turn. With regard to the possibility of me carrying out training linked to risk and resiliency principles or facilitating discussion about these principles between staff members; the designated teacher said that although there was interest from the staff he had approached, he had since found out that all INSET sessions for the academic year had been pre-arranged, leaving no time available for this additional training or group work. However, the designated teacher said that there was a possibility that the school would request this training from the EPS next academic year and that he would have further conversations with the head teacher about this. The forward planning of the INSET sessions was identified as a limiting factor, in that it meant that there was little flexibility for such involvement as the type discussed with the designated teacher.

Since the date of our last meeting, the designated teacher and I had considered some of the issues and questions which could be addressed in the broad areas considered for the school-based PEP interview schedule, linked to the four resiliency factors. We had been in touch through phone calls and email, and so I had brought with me and emailed through to the designated teacher in advance, a draft version of the school-based PEP interview schedule (Appendix H). The designated teacher and I had some concerns that a number of CiC would find it difficult and/or feel uncomfortable answering questions related to friendships and teachers. The designated teacher asked me whether I could give examples from my own practice of creative means of obtaining information linked to these areas. I mentioned the use of scaling questions
and how they work, based on the work of George, Iveson and Ratner (2006); however I was careful not to insist that this should be the approach used, as I wanted the designated teacher to have ownership over decision-making. The designated teacher had no experience of using scaling questions with CiC during his meetings with them; however he was keen to trial their use. He recognised that they could provide him with a flexible means of eliciting information which would help him to work towards solutions with CiC.

It was therefore decided that we would use scaling questions about areas linked to friendships and relationships with teachers, whereby pupils could give a rating of 1 to 10 (with ‘1’ representing ‘poor’ and ‘10’ representing ‘great’). It was hoped that the use of scaling would provide a non-threatening means through which more information could be elicited from CiC. For example, we decided that the number that the pupil rated their response to the question could be commented on, and then further questions could be asked in order to seek more detail. For example, ‘I notice that you rated your friendships in school as a ’3’. What made you rate your friendships as a ‘3’ rather than a ’5’?‘ What would have to be different for you to rate your friendships as a ’5’?‘ Comments could also be made to reinforce strengths and what is going well. For example, ‘What makes you rate your friendships in school as a ’6’ rather than a ’4’?’

In addition to the rating questions related to CiC’s views about their relationships with teachers, we decided that it would be useful to ask CiC to describe their ideal teacher as we felt that through this we would be able to elicit which characteristics demonstrated by teachers were considered important to individual CiC. Teachers have an important role in supporting CiC. For example, Triseliotis, Borland, Hill and Lambert (1995) found that some young people who receive support from social services would rather confide in teachers than social workers. We decided to have a question asking the CiC whether they could identify a member of staff who they perceived to be a ‘close fit’ to the description of their ideal teacher. The purpose of this was to try to establish staff member(s) whom the CiC had good relationships with and to try to find ways of capitalising on these good relationships, as appropriate. For example, we
decided to ask the CiC whether they would find it helpful to have individual meetings with another member of staff as well as the designated teacher during the school year.

In the school work/general section of the interview schedule, we decided to ask CiC what their favourite lesson is and then ask them to give reasons for their choice. We thought it would also beneficial to ask them how they liked to be rewarded or receive praise at school. We felt that this information was particularly important given that the CiC were at the age of adolescence and thus likely to be more self-conscious of their social standing and concerned with social acceptance from peers (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). For example, we hypothesised that some CiC may prefer non-verbal praise to verbal praise. The SIMS data had also highlighted to us that the Year 7 pupils recorded significantly more achievement points than the pupils in the other year groups. It therefore seemed to us that other methods of praise and reward systems would perhaps be preferable for older pupils. We came up with several options as to how pupils could be rewarded, all of which the designated teacher deemed would be possible to carry out within school. We felt that giving pupils options would be helpful to them, although we also decided that we would remind pupils that they could also give their own preference if it had not been included in the options provided.

We decided to ask the CiC whether there were particular adults at home whom they would like to be informed when they do particularly well at school. This was in order to address one of the four factors associated with bringing about positive change in the school experiences of CiC, that is, close links between home and school. For example, birth parents’ interest and importance placed on their children’s education has been identified as a motivating factor in CiC’s desire to succeed at school (Martin and Jackson, 2002). We also decided to ask the pupils whether there were particular adults in school they would like to be informed when they do particularly well at school. This was done to reinforce pupils’ sense of being valued by teachers. Further if a CiC has a lack of supportive relationships with adults outside of school, a good relationship with a teacher may help to compensate for this, as Galbo (1996) has suggested.

We felt that it would be useful to ask CiC to rate their attendance and behaviour at school over the term. We decided to give pupils options to choose from. We decided
that we would ask pupils to give reasons for their choices and, if appropriate, talk about how positive changes could be made. It was hoped that pupils would then be able to come up with their own suggestions as to how school staff could support them to improve their behaviour and/or attendance.

In the extra-curricular activities section of the interview schedule, we decided that it would be useful to find out whether the CiC were members of any of the clubs on offer at school, or members of any clubs outside of school. Participation in extra-curricular activities has been associated with promoting resilience as it develops pupils’ self-esteem (Rutter, 1990; Gilligan, 2000; Newman and Blackburn, 2002). As I had read in the literature that CiC may benefit from having the opportunity to try out different activities (Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999), I asked the designated teacher his thoughts about whether it was feasible to offer CiC the opportunity to attend extra-curricular activity ‘taster’ sessions. The designated teacher felt that this would be practicable, so we included a section in the schedule related to this. We also decided to include a question about whether there were any particular clubs not currently being offered to pupils at school, which the CiC would be interested in attending if they were made available. It was hoped that this would help us to elicit some of the pupil’s hobbies and interests. It was agreed that the CiC would be told that although there was no guarantee that it would be possible to set the club up at school, whether there were any similar clubs in the pupil’s local area could be investigated.

We decided that the school-based PEP interview schedule would end with a ‘looking ahead’ section in which up to three goals would be set which the CiC hoped to achieve over the next school term. We recognised that scaffolding would be needed for this; otherwise the CiC might set goals which were too broad or unmanageable. We agreed that a date for reviewing the goals would be set and that the CiC would receive a pupil-friendly ‘goal card’ stating the goals.

We felt that an introduction was also required to the school-based PEP interview schedule. We decided that CiC would always be told that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions being put to them; the important thing was for them to be truthful. The pupils would be told that the information that they shared with the
designated teacher would not be shared with other people, without permission being obtained first. If the interview schedule had been used more than once, we decided that it would be appropriate to reflect on the progress made with the goals/targets set at previous times.

4.1.11: Stage 11 – Implementation of action

At this stage of the RADIO approach, the actions are implemented. Thus, during this stage of the approach the designated teacher and I trialled the use of the school-based PEP interview schedule during a meeting with a CiC. Although the purpose of this piece of research was to work with key staff members to bring about positive change in the school experiences of CiC, the designated teacher and I felt that because our work had involved developing the school-based PEP interview schedule which would be used with CiC, their views on it were important. This being so, it would have been against my value of ‘inclusion’ to have not included the voice of CiC. The designated teacher and I agreed that immediately following our meeting with the CiC, we would seek feedback from the pupil regarding his opinions on the school-based PEP interview schedule. We also agreed to share our own reflections of the process, with the CiC and then with each other.

The pupil chosen by the designated teacher was a Year 8 CiC, who for reasons of confidentiality, will be referred to by the pseudonym ‘Rob’. Consent was obtained for Rob via a letter detailing the research, which included a return slip for him to complete, with an ‘opt in’ or ‘opt out’ option (Appendix C). No pressure was applied to Rob; he was informed that the choice or whether or not to participate was his. In addition, his foster carer was provided with a letter and return slip to complete (Appendix D), and the designated teacher also contacted Rob’s social worker to seek her consent. Consent was obtained from the pupil, his foster carer and social worker.

At the beginning of the meeting with Rob, he was made aware of his right to withdraw at any stage during the research and his right to decline to answer any of the questions put to him. He was informed that the designated teacher and I would be present during the meeting and that we both would be asking him questions related to his
experiences at school. He was given reassurance that there were no right or wrong answers; the important thing was for him to be truthful. He was told that the information which he shared with the designated teacher and I would not be shared with other individuals, without having obtained his permission first. Rob was assured that his real name would not be used in the write-up of the research. The meeting with the Rob took place in the designated teacher’s office, which was familiar to him. We felt that choosing a familiar place in which to carry out the meeting would help to put Rob at ease.

As an active participant in the research, Rob’s views were very important to me and to the designated teacher. Indeed, Sutoris’ (2000) notion of a pupil is that of an, ‘active participant’ (p. 54). Sutoris (ibid.) regards schools as, ‘social institutions’ (p. 51), which provide a template for pupils to take up roles in other systems in life beyond school. Thus, he feels that schools prepare pupils for the roles and responsibilities of adulthood, and crucial to his view is his notion of the pupil as an, ‘active participant’ (Sutoris, ibid., p. 54).

**Outcomes of use of school-based PEP interview schedule with pupil**

This section will briefly outline the findings when the school-based PEP interview schedule was trialled with Rob.

**Friendships**

Rob rated his friendships within school as ‘8’ out of ‘10’. When asked for any reasons as to why he rated his friendships as ‘8’, Rob replied that it was because he has, ‘...some good friends and some bad friends’. Rob said, ‘Bad friends get me into trouble’, but he then commented, ‘It’s my choice. I know when I’m doing wrong. I know I should just choose to hang around with my good friends more often.’ Rob said that if he never got into trouble with friends, then he would rate his friendships as ‘10’. Rob seemed to be happy with his friendships; he said that he had ‘no problems’ in this respect. For this reason, a relatively short period of time was spent on this section with Rob.
Rob rated his relationships with teachers as ‘6’ out of ‘10’. He said that his reason for choosing a ‘6’ was because, ‘Teachers sometimes shout at me’. Rob then added, ‘It’s not just that they tell me off. It’s how some of them do it. I hate it when they get close up to my face and shout at me.’ Rob said that when teachers shout at him, ‘Sometimes it makes me go mad and that’s when I say things to them, like swear words and I get into even more trouble.’ Rob, however, commented, ‘Most of the time when teachers shout, I know that they do it for my own good.’ Rob was asked what made him rate his relationships with teachers as a ‘6’ rather than a ‘2’. He said that he would have chosen a ‘2’ if teachers were always, ‘picking’ on him. He gave examples of what he perceived as teachers picking on him, such as them telling him off during class ‘every time’ he spoke. The designated teacher asked Rob whether he would have rated his relationships with teachers differently last term, to which Rob replied that last term he would have rated these relationships as a ‘4’. Rob explained that the reason that he would rate the relationships more highly now is because, ‘I’m being good more often.’ When asked what changes would have to occur for him to rate his relationships with teachers more highly than a ‘6’, he commented, ‘If I stop messing around in lessons and don’t answer back’.

When asked to describe his ideal teacher, Rob said that the person would, ‘Never shout and be chilled out.’ I asked him whether there was a teacher in school who fit this description and he pointed to the designated teacher, adding, ‘It’s true. You always listen to me and you stay calm.’ Rob also named two other teachers who he felt matched the description. Rob was asked whether in addition to meeting with the designated teacher, it would be helpful to have individual meetings with another member of staff, at set times throughout the school year. He said that he was happy just to meet with the designated teacher. When the designated teacher asked who Rob would choose to meet with if he was absent, Rob named one of the teachers he had earlier identified as an, ‘ideal teacher’.
School work/general

Rob said that his favourite lessons are PE and technology, because he enjoys, ‘Doing stuff...and there’s no writing in those lessons.’ Rob talked about a recent piece of work he had done in technology, which he had been proud of. When Rob was asked to choose how he likes to be rewarded when he does particularly well at school, he said that he likes it when his foster parents find out about his achievements. He added that he would like the head teacher to find out about his achievements too. When asked for reasons why this was important to him, Rob commented, ‘Because then the head can tell other staff what I’ve done well...he’s the most important one [staff member] in school so I want him to know. He can tell staff that I’ve done something well if they’re saying bad stuff about me.’

Rob elaborated further by saying, ‘Some teachers, they don’t give you a chance. On the first day of teaching me, one of the teachers said, “I’ve heard about you from [names teacher]. I’ve heard about what you’re like. I’m watching you.” He hadn’t even got to know anything about me, so it wasn’t fair.’

Rob said that nothing was worrying him about school at the moment.

Rob rated his attendance at school as, ‘good’ and his behaviour in school as, ‘ok’. With regard to his behaviour, Rob commented, ‘It depends what kind of mood I’m in...Sometimes I’m in a bad mood, and then I don’t behave well.’ Rob volunteered the following, ‘Although my attendance is good, my punctuality is bad, especially getting to registration on time in the morning.’ Rob went on to explain that he walks to school with a couple of friends and commented, ‘We make each other late by messsing around on the way to school.’ Rob turned to the designated teacher to check whether pupils could bring bikes to school. When the designated teacher said that it was allowed, Rob said, ‘I might start bringing my bike then.’

Extra-curricular activities

Rob told me that he is a member of the school’s boxing club. When asked whether there were any other clubs in school that he might consider attending a taster session
for, Rob replied that he was happy just to attend the boxing club. He added though that he would prefer it if boxing club was held more regularly.

**Looking ahead**

Rob was able to identify two goals that he hoped to achieve over the next term. His first goal was, ‘To try to get to registration on time’ and his second goal was to, ‘Not swear’. It was discussed with Rob what might help him to get to registration on time. Rob mentioned that he could come to school on a bike or walk with different friends to school. However, reflecting on the second option, he commented, ‘I don’t want my mates to ask, “Why are you walking to school with someone else?”’ I asked Rob whether he could think of anything that might help to persuade his friends to arrive to school on time. He replied, ‘No, because it doesn’t bother them that they’re late.’ As it seemed that there was a tension between Rob’s desire to be on time in mornings for registration and his desire to ‘fit in’ with his friends, this presented an opportunity for problem-solving. The designated teacher broached with Rob whether he might like to have a responsibility in school at nine o’clock every morning. As well as promoting Rob’s sense of being part of the school community the hope was that this would give Rob a specific reason to arrive at school on-time, making his desire to arrive on time more ‘socially acceptable’ to his friends. It was agreed with Rob that the designated teacher could discuss this further with him at a later date.

Rob’s second goal, which was to, ‘not swear’ was discussed with him. The designated teacher asked Rob whether he could think of a way of making this goal more specific to school. The designated teacher gave the example that if Rob was to injure himself, it might be difficult to keep to this goal. Rob replied that the goal could be changed to, ‘Do not swear in front of teachers.’

Rob said that he could not think of a third goal at that time.
Pupil’s reflections on the use of the school-based PEP interview schedule

The designated teacher led the reflective questioning with Rob. It was pleasing to me that the designated teacher did this, without any prompting from me. It was clear that the designated teacher, like myself, viewed Rob as an, ‘active participant’ (Sutoris, ibid., p. 54), and valued his opinions. Rob was asked to give his overall impression of how he found the questioning. Rob said that he found it, ‘better’ to give his opinions about different aspects of school through speaking rather than through writing. He said that he liked having, ‘options’ for some of the answers; he commented, ‘When you’re having to think on the spot, it’s sometimes hard to just think of an answer so it was good to be able to choose [answers]’. He also said that he liked the use of scaling questions, but he found it difficult to articulate why, explaining, ‘I can’t really think of [a reason] why; they were just good.’

Rob said that he could not think of anything which would have improved the school-based PEP interview schedule. He was asked whether he would have preferred it if he had to provide the same information using ICT, but he said that this would not have made the school-based PEP interview schedule any better for him. Rob said that he was, ‘ok’ with being asked the questions verbally.

Debriefing the CiC

At the end of our meeting, Rob was thanked for his involvement in the action research. He was informed of the nature of the research and given opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns. Rob was informed that the feedback he had provided us with had been helpful and he was given an example of a change that would be made to it as a direct result of his feedback; that is, that the interview schedule would be amended to include CiC’s opinions about their overall punctuality at school for the term. Rob did not ask any questions or raise any concerns. Rob was informed that should he feel any upset arising from issues discussed in the meeting then he could come and talk to the designated teacher at any point about his feelings. He was also told that he could contact me if he any further questions about the research or any
concerns. We discussed with Rob who else he may wish to talk to in and out of school should he feel any upset. Before Rob returned to class, a short time was spent with him discussing general issues of his choice, unrelated to the research. This neutral discussion enabled Rob to move from a self-reflective state to a present focused state in order to facilitate a successful return to class.

**Reflections on the process: how discussion with the designated teacher led to changes to the school-based PEP interview schedule**

The designated teacher and I took the opportunity after we had finished our meeting with Rob and once he had returned to class, to reflect on the process of using the school-based PEP interview schedule. We both agreed that we could not make assumptions based on Rob’s responses about how other CiC would respond to the areas covered in the school-based PEP interview schedule. With regard to the delivery of the interview schedule, as the designated teacher commented, ‘It completely depends on the individual...some would be ok talking to me, but others would prefer to just get on with filling it out like a questionnaire on their own.’

We therefore discussed how the school-based PEP interview schedule could be developed so that there were different versions of it: an online version; its use as a script by the designated teacher and a ‘tick sheet’ version, whereby a CiC could tick or circle answers. We agreed that it would probably be most effective if CiC were permitted to choose which version of the school-based PEP they would like to complete.

The designated teacher shared that he felt that before moving onto goals at the end of the ‘interview’ with Rob, it would have been beneficial to summarise Rob’s strengths, which had been identified during the interview. He suggested that this might inspire a pupil to feel positive that any subsequent goals set would be achievable. I agreed that before the goal setting, a summary section would be worthwhile. In this section, the designated teacher would summarise the information which had been discussed and particularly focus on positives and offer praise. We agreed that this would be added to our design of the school-based PEP interview schedule.
The designated teacher and I spoke at some length about goal setting and the potential difficulties for CiC in doing this. The designated teacher felt that, ‘scaffolding’ would be helpful; he commented, ‘I think otherwise they [pupils] might have difficulty in coming up with goals that are specific enough.’ He felt that a summary of the CiC’s strengths before the goal setting would help pupils to spot the areas which they had not identified as strengths, and that these areas could then be used to form the basis for goal setting. The designated teacher suggested that it may be helpful for pupils to be directed to set three goals, linked to specific areas, for example, social, educational and personal development. Although I agreed with the designated teacher that scaffolding was likely to be beneficial in helping CiC with their goal setting, I discussed with the designated teacher potential pitfalls to be aware of when scaffolding. For example, scaffolding could inadvertently lead to CiC setting goals of little concern to themselves, but of particular concern to others. I felt that the starting point of goals should always, wherever possible, come from the CiC so that they had ownership over them. The designated teacher and I agreed therefore that there would be scaffolding in the sense that the summary could be used to highlight the areas the CiC’s progress and indicate areas for further development. However, we felt that it should not be a stipulation that the CiC should identify three goals. If the CiC stated a goal which was deemed to be too broad and unrealistic, we discussed how the designated teacher could help the pupil break the goal down into one that was more achievable.

I also discussed with the designated teacher how pupils could be guided to set their goals using positive language; for example, ‘Do not swear in front of teachers’ could be reworded as, ‘Use polite language in front of teachers.’ However, I acknowledged that there is a risk that by changing the wording of the language used by the CiC, the CiC’s ownership of the goal may decrease. Thus, negotiation with the CiC regarding use of phrasing of the goals is of key importance. We also discussed the importance of setting a particular date to review the goals, and of giving pupils their own signed copy of the goals to take away with them.

As Rob had described his punctuality as ‘bad’, the designated teacher and I decided that it would be useful to include a rating question about punctuality in the school-based PEP interview schedule. The designated teacher had noticed that for some
pupils regular lack of punctuality was an issue, even though, as in Rob’s case, their attendance was good.

The designated teacher said that he felt that the school-based PEP interview schedule had, ‘worked well’ in its use with Rob. He reflected that it had made him aware of how scaling could be a useful technique in eliciting information from pupils. He said that some of the points raised by Rob through the use of the schedule, for example Rob’s desire for the head teacher to know when he has done well at school, may not have arisen during usual meetings. Indeed, we agreed that Rob’s comment about wanting the head teacher to find out about his achievements would be added to the possible options regarding how a CiC would like to be rewarded when they have done particularly well at school. The designated teacher said that it had been beneficial for us to jointly carry out the interview schedule with Rob as it had given him the confidence to trial it on his own with a pupil in the future. It was therefore agreed that before my next visit on 25.02.10 he would trial the slightly reviewed interview schedule (Appendix I) with another CiC.

4.1.12: Stage 12 - Evaluating action

This stage of the action research involves stakeholders reviewing the effectiveness of action and possibly leads to the request of further involvement from the TEP/EP.

On 25.02.10, I met with the designated teacher in order to review the effectiveness of the school-based interview schedule. Firstly, I asked the designated teacher whether any actions to support Rob had been planned as a result of the outcomes of the school-based PEP interview schedule. The designated teacher said that there had not been an opportunity yet to do this, but that he was able to identify key areas which would be addressed during his next meeting with him. For example, the designated teacher was going to discuss with Rob whether he would like a responsibility in-school for first thing in a morning. He said that he was also going to discuss with Rob again his possible goals for the coming term in order to help him to narrow them down and make them more manageable.
The designated teacher told me that he had used the school-based PEP interview schedule with another CiC in school, a Year 10 pupil. He told me that overall the pupil seemed to respond well to the questions although he seemed to have more difficulty in articulating his answers than Rob did. For example, the designated teacher noticed that the pupil was unable to articulate what his ‘ideal teacher’ was like. Like Rob, the pupil only wanted to have meetings with the designated teacher and with no other staff member(s). The designated teacher felt that a reason for this was that the pupil was keen for his ‘in care’ status to remain unknown to staff. The pupil rated his friendships as a ‘9’ out of ‘10’ and his relationships with staff as a ‘7’ out of ‘10’, although he found it difficult to articulate his reasons as to why. The pupil said that his preferred way of being praised was to receive stickers and verbal praise, but he did not like to receive either of these forms of praise in front of other class members. The pupil identified his favourite lesson to be horticulture because he said that he enjoyed being outdoors and involved in something practical. The pupil was not a member of any extra-curricular clubs and he did not express an interest in joining any clubs. The pupil rated his attendance and punctuality for the term as ‘excellent’ and his behaviour as, ‘good’. The designated teacher said that the pupil had difficulty in identifying goals, so this was something that was going to be returned to.

The designated teacher and I reflected on the outcomes of the use of the school-based PEP interview schedule with the second pupil. The designated teacher said that he felt that the pupil had difficulty in articulating himself, rather than him being reluctant to do so. However, we recognised that some CiC may not like to talk openly about their feelings about different aspects of school. As the designated teacher commented, ‘Some pupils welcome regular chats about how they are doing at school and about how they are feeling whereas I can think of other pupils who would rather just fill out a form and let me know [the information] that way.’ This again alerted us to the issue that there was a need for the school-based PEP to be developed in ways which catered for the different preferences of CiC in how information is shared with the designated teacher.

As the designated teacher pointed out, because the school-based PEP interview schedule can only capture the opinions of a CiC on a particular day at a particular
moment in time, their responses should only be regarded as contributing a small part towards the full picture of their school experiences. The designated teacher recognised that having an ‘open door’ policy was still an important part of his role. Therefore, we agreed that the school-based PEP interview schedule should not be used in isolation to determine a pupil’s strengths and needs.

We also reflected on the use of a scaling system from 1-10. The designated teacher said that he felt that a smaller scale, for example 1-5, would be better as he felt that less movement within the scale would make the selection of a number easier for pupils. He commented, ‘I think that some pupils would find it difficult to identify a difference between say 6 and 7, unless the differences between each of the numbers were made very clear to them.’ We discussed this issue and agreed that the designated teacher would ask pupils whether they would prefer to use a scale of 1-5 or a scale of 1-10 for scaling questions. We also considered whether for some pupils, it would make the scales more accessible if numbers were replaced with faces or specific rating verdicts were matched to each number.

In order to elicit the designated teacher’s perceptions of the action research, and as part of my evaluation process, I carried out a semi-structured interview with him. Specifically, I wanted to find out his reflections of the action research process; whether being involved in the action research had changed how he viewed the role of the EP and whether he could think of any ways that the school-based PEP interview schedule could be developed further. The three questions which I asked the designated teacher during the interview are presented in Appendix J.

The interview was then transcribed (Appendix K). The transcript was read several times and I made notes in the left hand side of the margin about anything I felt was interesting or significant. In the right hand column, I documented emerging theme titles and then from this, I produced a preliminary list of themes (Table 4.4). The list of themes is chronological in that it shows the sequence that the themes occurred in the transcript. Connections between the themes were then made through clustering themes together (Table 4.5). Table 4.6 shows the names that the clusters themselves were given; Smith and Osborn (2003) refer to them as superordinate themes. Further,
in Table 4.6, each theme is accompanied by an identifier. The identifiers show where in the transcript instances of each theme can be found by including key words from the extract as well as the page number of the transcript on which the theme can be found.

Table 4.4: Preliminary themes

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outsider perspective</th>
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<tr>
<td>Being close to systems can serve as a barrier to improving practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fresh eye and fresh perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valuing expertise from other areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative approach</td>
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<td>Everyone having their own expertise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff have chances to reflect on practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developmental process of action research</td>
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<td>Identifying value in the school-based PEP interview schedule</td>
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<td>Recognition that the development of the school-based PEP interview schedule is ongoing</td>
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<td>Importance of making the school-based PEP interview schedule manageable for pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delivery of the school-based PEP interview schedule is important</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building up information about CiC is important</td>
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<td>EPs supporting staff in the development of whole school practice</td>
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<td>Issues of EP time limitations</td>
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<td>The importance of using information gathered about CiC to promote positive</td>
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outcomes for them

Staff working with the EP to help a pupil move forwards

School-based PEP interview schedule helps identify type of support required for CiC

Role of the EP in supporting staff

Role of the EP in supporting pupils

**Table 4.5: Clustering of themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outsider perspective</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fresh eye and fresh perspective</td>
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<td>Valuing expertise from other areas</td>
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<td>EPs supporting staff in the development of whole school practice</td>
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</table>
Issues of EP time limitations

Staff working with the EP to help a pupil move forwards

Role of the EP in supporting staff

Role of the EP in supporting pupils

Identifying value in the school-based PEP interview schedule

Recognition that the development of the school-based PEP interview schedule is ongoing

Importance of making the school-based PEP interview schedule manageable for pupils

Delivery of the school-based PEP interview schedule is important

Building up information about CiC is important

The importance of using information gathered about CiC to promote positive outcomes for them

School-based PEP interview schedule helps identify type of support required for CiC

Table 4.6: Table of themes

Benefits of having involvement from an outsider to the school

Outsider perspective – 1.2 ‘I’ve perceived it as an outside eye looking in’; 1.17 ‘outside eye’

Fresh eye and fresh perspective – 1.9-1.10 ‘A bit like when you get NQTs coming in and...
they bring a fresh eye and a fresh perspective and I think that’s important’

Being close to systems can serve as a barrier to improving practice – 1.5-1.7
‘...sometimes when you’re close to systems, you don’t see how well you’re working or perhaps you don’t see how you could improve the system’

Action research as a positive way of working
Staff have chances to reflect on practice – 1.19-1.20 ‘...the way that the process has been set up, with chances to reflect, has allowed us to do this’; 1.37-1.38 – ‘...because teachers are so busy with the day-to-day goings on; it’s helpful to have that time’

Developmental process of action research – 1.18-1.19 ‘...it’s been a developmental process and therefore you try something, you see how it works and you make changes to it as necessary’

Collaborative approach – 1.11-1.12 ‘Collaboration is the word I’m looking for’; 1.12 - ‘...everybody works together’

Everyone having their own expertise – 1.12 ‘Everybody brings their own expertise’

The role of the EP in supporting practice
Valuing expertise from other areas - 1.12 ‘Everybody brings their own expertise’

EPs supporting staff in the development of whole school practice - 1.39-1.40 ‘...you
coming in and then going away and taking away bits of information to help develop systems; that’s bound to be positive’

Issues of EP time limitations – 2.2-2.3 ‘I know that EP time can be limited’

Role of the EP in supporting staff to help pupils move forwards - 2.20-2.22 ‘...the EP working with small groups of kids; helping to support our behaviour support in school...that would be good stuff’; 2.17-2.19 ‘So people who have been specifically trained as to how you might deal with certain emotional behavioural issues; [their support] would be of benefit’; 2.10-2.12 ‘...working with the EP to help the pupil to move forwards and make positive strides from where they are to be where they want to be’

Role of the EP in supporting pupils – 2.20-2.22 ‘...the EP working with small groups of kids...that would be good stuff’

Reflections on the development of the school-based PEP interview schedule

Identifying value in the school-based PEP interview schedule – 1.23 ‘...there is value in it’

Recognition that the development of the school-based PEP interview schedule is ongoing – 1.23 ‘...just a bit of tweaking that needs to be done’; 1.28-1.29 ‘I do think that there is a bit of tweaking that needs to be done’

Importance of making the school-based PEP interview schedule manageable for pupils
1.28-1.30 ‘...a bit of tweaking that needs to be done in terms of making it more manageable for the pupils. Some pupils find it difficult to articulate as part of that process’

Delivery of the school-based PEP interview schedule is important – 1.30-1.31 ‘...it’s not the format of the questionnaire, but the way that we need to deliver it’

Building up information about CiC is important – 1.24-1.28 – ‘...allowing us to build up information in school, which allows us to manage the time that the person [CiC] has in school with me. Without information that’s relevant, you can’t manage that time effectively...in that respect [the school-based PEP] is brilliant’

The importance of using information gathered about CiC to promote positive outcomes for them – 2.10-2.12 ‘...taking that information and working with the EP to help the pupil to move forwards and make positive strides from where they are to be where they want to be’

School-based PEP interview schedule helps identify type of support required for CiC – 2.19-2.20 ‘The information we collect about a pupil, perhaps through the questionnaire could then be used to inform ways of working’

The responses from the designated teacher clustered around four superordinate themes: 1) Benefits of having involvement from an outsider to the school; 2) Action research as a positive way of working; 3) The role of the EP in supporting practice, and 4) Reflections on the development of the school-based PEP interview schedule.
Benefits of having involvement from an outsider to the school

The designated teacher made reference several times to me having an outsider perspective, which he regarded as an advantage. Indeed, he indicated a wariness of being too close to systems in that, ‘...you don’t see how well you’re working or perhaps you don’t see how you could improve the system.’

Action research as a positive way of working

The designated teacher spoke positively about action research. He seemed to particularly value the opportunities for reflection, which action research allows for. He identified that in everyday practice opportunities for reflection can be limited. The designated teacher liked the developmental process of action research; indeed he explicitly made reference to this process; ‘...you try something, you see how it works and you make changes to it as necessary.’ He also referred to the collaborative nature of action research. Linked to this, the designated teacher regarded everybody as experts in their own areas. He did not indicate that he perceived that any one person had more expertise than another person.

The role of the EP in supporting practice

The designated teacher was able to reflect on our work together and also identify potential future roles for EPs in developing whole-school practice through action research. He did raise the issue of EPs’ time limitations and how this may have an impact on how well systems can be developed through action research.

He referred to the ‘expertise’ that EPs can offer schools, and how this could be used to support staff to develop whole-school practice. He did not, however, refer to specific areas of EP expertise. However, as mentioned previously, it did not seem to me that he was implying that EPs have any more or any less expertise overall than staff; rather he was identifying the added value that EPs could bring to the expertise already in school.

The designated teacher recognised the value of joint-working between staff and the EP. Referring to the school-based PEP interview schedule, the designated teacher identified that it could be used by a designated teacher to find out information about a pupil which could then potentially be shared with an EP in order to inform the planning
of next steps. Again making reference to the school-based PEP interview schedule, the designated teacher was able to identify how it could be used to inform how the EP could support pupils through working directly with them. The designated teacher therefore seemed to regard the purpose of the school-based PEP interview schedule as a tool which could be used to collect information about CiC, with the information collected used as a starting point for action.

**Reflections on the development of the school-based PEP interview schedule**

The designated teacher identified that the development of the school-based PEP interview schedule had been beneficial. He appreciated that it was a work in progress and that ‘tweaking’ was needed in order to make it more manageable for some CiC. In particular he felt that some pupils may find it difficult to articulate their feelings as part of the process. For example, during our meetings together we considered that some pupils might prefer to complete an online version of the school-based PEP interview schedule independently and that a shortened version, which involved ticking or circling answers, may be more appropriate for some pupils. We recognised that some pupils may feel uncomfortable sharing personal information during face-to-face meetings.

During the interview, the designated teacher shared his view that the way the school-based PEP interview schedule was delivered by a designated teacher to a CiC was important. Although he did not elaborate further about this during the interview, it is possible that he was making reference to our earlier conversations when we had discussed that some pupils may prefer non-verbal ways of sharing information, such as providing written information about their school experiences. We had also talked about the importance of designated teachers respecting that some CiC may not want to share certain details about their school experiences, so the designated teacher was perhaps referring to this issue too.

The designated teacher identified some of the potential uses of the school-based PEP interview schedule. He described it as, ‘brilliant’ in the respect that it enables designated teachers to build up information about CiC. He emphasised that the information should then inform future support and provision for each CiC. The
designated teacher recognised that this could be done in collaboration with an EP. During the interview he seemed to seek my affirmation that using the school-based PEP interview schedule to inform future planning in supporting CiC was important as he used the question, ‘I mean it’s not just about finding out information about pupils, is it, but about taking that information and findings ways forward?’ (2.8-2.10)

Reflections on the interview with the designated teacher

It is possible that my presence and the use of a digital recorder may have impacted on how honest the designated teacher felt he could be in his responses. However, I feel that the trust that I had established with him throughout the action research meant that he was comfortable in sharing his honest responses to my questions.

It was interesting that the designated teacher perceived having an, ‘outside eye’ to the school as a positive. As mentioned in section 3.3.3, there is an argument that action research should be carried out by those within a situation rather than by outsiders because the process will be, ‘inevitably controversial’ (Winter and Badley, 2007, p. 258) and may generate, ‘defensive rejection’ (Winter and Badley, ibid.). The designated teacher, however, regarded my presence not as a ‘threat’, but as an opportunity for him to collaborate with somebody who was bringing a, ‘fresh perspective.’

When the designated teacher spoke about the action research process he mentioned the key aspects of the process which he found to be particularly beneficial. He seemed to fully understand how action research was different to more traditional ways of working; for example, research whereby each individual would have a prescribed role from the outset. From a personal point of view this was particularly pleasing to me as it made me feel confident that action research in its true sense had been carried out. As I had never carried out action research prior to this piece of research, one of my initial concerns was that I would be directive, so I was pleased that the designated teacher regarded the process as collaborative. I was particularly drawn to his comment that he liked having chances to reflect. Thinking back to my years as a teacher, I could identify with his comment that often the, ‘full on’ demands of the job limit the opportunities for reflection.
Although I asked the designated teacher about whether his involvement in action research had changed how he could see the EP working with the school in the future, I acknowledge that he may not have the same level of understanding of the role of the EP as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) does. On reflection therefore it may have been better to omit the use of the word ‘changed’ from the question as the word implied that he was already aware of the types of work carried out by the EP in school. However, the designated teacher spoke generally about the benefits of action research as well as the types of work that the EP could do in the school arising from findings elicited from the school-based PEP interview. Therefore it seemed to me that the issue of ‘change’ was not covered in his response anyway. It was interesting, as well as positive, that the designated teacher did not perceive the role of the EP to be limited to working with either staff or pupils. He identified that the EP had a role in working with staff and pupils, at individual, group and whole-school levels.

It was pleasing to me that the designated teacher did not regard the school-based PEP interview schedule as a completed piece of work but as a work in progress. This highlighted to me that the designated teacher was continuing to reflect on its use. He also made reference to the fact that the delivery of the school-based PEP interview schedule needs to be sensitively tuned to an individual CiC’s needs and that a ‘one size fits all’ approach should not be supposed.

**LA reflections on the action research**

The team manager for CiC and the VSH had agreed via email to meet with me so that I could feedback the research to them and seek their comments. On 12.03.10, I visited the office where they both work.

Unfortunately on the day of my visit, the team manager for CiC told me that the VSH sent his apologies as he had been asked to attend another meeting and he felt his presence there was necessary.

With the team manager for CiC, I explained the processes I had gone through with staff in the secondary school. I shared how my discussion with the designated teacher had
resulted in the collaborative creation of a school-based PEP interview schedule. A copy of this was provided to the team manager for CiC and I talked through it with her. After each of the sections of the school-based PEP interview schedule had been shared with the team manager for CiC, I asked her to share her reflections.

The team manager for CiC seemed to like the structure of the interview schedule and she commented that the questions asked and areas covered were appropriate. She suggested that in the ‘school work/general’ section, it would be beneficial to ask the pupil directly whether there was anything that they felt was holding them back in their learning. In the same section, she felt that it would also be beneficial to include a question related to a pupil’s engagement in learning in order to elicit how successfully the pupil, in general, perceived that they were engaged in lessons. I talked with the team manager for CiC about how this question could be phrased. We agreed that for some pupils a clearer way of wording may be for the pupil to rate their ‘interest and involvement’ in lessons rather than their ‘engagement’ in lessons. The team manager for CiC and I also spoke about the concern that the designated teacher and I had about the ‘extra-curricular activities’ section of the school-based PEP interview schedule; namely that the option to attend ‘taster’ sessions of extra-curricular activities may not be enough alone to encourage the pupils to try new activities. The team manager for CiC suggested that discussing with the CiC whether they would like to ask a specific person/people to come with them to a ‘taster session’ may make some of the pupils feel more relaxed about attending a session. Linked to this we talked about the possibility of a pre-existing member of a particular club being introduced to a CiC, so that they could talk to the CiC about the club if the CiC was considering attending it. We both agreed that knowing that a familiar face would be present at a club may make a CiC feel more relaxed about attending a ‘taster session’.

The team manager for CiC described the school-based PEP interview schedule as, ‘...a valuable piece of work’. She felt that it would be a helpful resource to share with other designated teachers within the LA and she asked me whether I would give my agreement to it being shared with them. She asked whether she could distribute it during the upcoming training sessions she was due to hold for designated teachers. I said that from a personal point of view I was happy for this to happen; however, I
could not agree officially to this until I had sought permission from the designated teacher for CiC and from the Principal EP. I gave the same response when the team manager for CiC asked me whether the interview schedule could be made available electronically on the e-portal.

The team manager for CiC asked me whether it would be possible for me to do further work in terms of developing a school-based PEP interview schedule which pupils would complete independently and creating further resources for designated teachers. This is something I would like to do in the future and will be discussed further with my supervisor.

The conversation with the team manager for CiC also inspired me to make some additions to the interview schedule (Appendix L), which I later shared with the designated teacher for his approval or rejection. In the school work/general section I included a question which asked CiC whether there was anything that they felt was holding them back in their learning at school. A rating question linked to CiC’s engagement in their lessons was also included. A note was included in the extra-curricular activities section to remind designated teachers that some pupils may like the reassurance of seeing a familiar face if they attended a ‘taster session’. It was suggested that a ‘club buddy’ could be decided in advance and/or the pupil could be introduced to one or several current club member(s) who could talk to them about the club. A suggestion was also made that the pupil might want to ask a friend or adult to come along to the ‘taster session’ with them. As the designated teacher and I had also spoken about the possibility of the rating scale being smaller, that is, the use of a 5 point scale rather than a 10 point scale, I included text stating that CiC should be given the choice of which of the scales to use when rating items.

A week later I received consent from the designated teacher and the Principal EP that the school-based PEP interview schedule could be shared amongst designated teachers and accessed online. The designated teacher gave his consent to the changes. He also gave his consent to his name and role being included on the interview schedule. This was pleasing; as we had worked collaboratively on the piece of work, I was glad that he would be able to receive recognition for his involvement.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1: Discussion overview

The following chapter will present an overview of my personal reflections of the action research process, before addressing each of the research questions. Reference will be made to the literature. Throughout the discussion, I will discuss the research’s strengths and limitations. The chapter will end with reflections on overall conclusions and possible directions for future research.

The overall aim of the research was to use the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach to enable a secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC.

5.2: My personal reflections on the action research process

My contribution is original in the respect that I have influenced my personal learning as well as the learning of stakeholders. The school-based PEP interview schedule has potential significance for how staff may conduct meetings with CiC; however, this schedule is still very much a work in progress. At all stages of the research I engaged with relevant literature. Through this research I have aimed to live through my ontological values of inclusion, fairness, care and compassion towards others, working hard and trying hard. I hope that through my writing I have been able to communicate these values to you, as it is through the communication of these values that they are turned into living epistemological values of judgement (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006) against which my practice is held accountable. Through writing the narrative, I have realised the difficulties of communicating some of these values as well as I would like to; in particular the values of working hard and trying hard which I hope you will identify through your reading of this piece of work.

I followed McNiff and Whitehead’s (2006) criteria for evaluating my action research and through following their suggested evaluation criteria I hope that my claims to
knowledge are ‘validated’. To meet the authors’ criteria, I have endeavoured to do the following: shown how I collaborated with stakeholders; put my work up for public scrutiny; arranged for critique from my supervisor and a work colleague, and shown evidence from my practice linked to my values (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006).

Writing this piece of work in the first person has, I feel, helped with the authenticity of the writing. I also found writing my research diary useful as it provided a means of recording my reflections at every stage of the process. Critical reflection has been an ongoing part of the action research and I have aimed to show some of the difficulties of ‘real world’ research. For example, it would have been interesting to have involved more of the school’s staff members in the research, but this was not possible.

I feel that because I took the epistemological stance of relativism, collaboration was an integral part of the research. The focus was therefore on individuals reflecting on their practice and taking responsibility for their own ideas and actions, rather than attempting to find one ‘truth’ as to how positive change in the school experiences for CiC can be brought about. This took away any pressure which have might have been placed on me by stakeholders to be the ‘expert’, and instead I aimed to create conditions so that our learning was done through interactions with others. I feel that engaging in action research has furthered my own learning and has developed my practice as a TEP. It has also given me the confidence to undertake further organisational level work in the future. I have seen how action research can develop and improve practice at school and LA level through the creation of new knowledge. I was pleased that the designated teacher when reflecting on the action research commented that, ‘Everybody brings their own expertise.’ This suggested to me that he had identified all stakeholders as being equal in the research. Further, as inclusion is one of my key values, his comment suggests that I lived this value through the research.

The findings from the research will now be considered in relation to each of the RQs.
5.3: RQ1 - How can an EP enable a secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC through working at an organisational level?

This RQ will be addressed by focusing on how I enabled the secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC through working at an organisational level. It will also consider more general issues such as the factors which can constrain opportunities for EPs to become involved in organisational working.

The emphasis on EPs taking a collaborative approach and working at an organisational level fits in well with current thinking regarding the role of the EP. Moving away from the view of the EP’s role as that of an ‘expert’ being primarily involved at individual casework level, current thinking seems to advocate more systemic working, based on consultation, training and research (Dowd and Thorne, 2007).

Specifically referring to action research, Simm and Ingram (2008) describe EPs as, ‘well-placed’ (Simm and Ingram, ibid., p. 51) to engage in this type of organisational working with schools. EPs can share their psychological knowledge and knowledge of research to enable staff to develop their practice. Certainly, in this piece of research, the designated teacher referred to the ‘expertise’ that EPs can offer schools and how this expertise could be used to support staff to develop practice at a whole-school level.

However, it is important that in action research, there is not a power imbalance; the EP should be facilitating collaboration rather than acting as a leader. McNiff and Whitehead (2006) perceive this to be the researcher being in relation to others, leading to the sharing of power. It is therefore pleasing that during the evaluation interview with the designated teacher he recognised his own expertise which he brought to the action research. Certainly, empowering individuals; giving them ownership over situations and negotiating and building coalitions are what Eilertsen, Gustafson and Salo (2008) regard action research to be about. I feel that enabling the adults involved in working closely with children to feel a sense of ownership over situations, helps to move away from an assumption that the EP is the ‘expert’. EPs should therefore aim for the conditions set out by Eilertsen et al. (ibid.) in all types of organisational working.
I feel that working primarily with staff in the secondary school enabled me to minimise issues around lack of engagement, access and confidentiality which might have occurred had the intention been to work with individual CiC. This is a common difficulty when working with vulnerable groups of children. Further, working with staff in the school meant that the risk of particular CiC feeling ‘singled out’ was reduced. As the deputy head teacher and team manager for CiC had shared, and as is supported in Martin and Jackson’s (2002) research, CiC often do not want to be seen as being treated differently to their peers.

Working closely with the designated teacher enabled me to capitalise on the existing relationships he had already established with CiC. It allowed us to plan for a way of working with CiC that complemented existing provision in place for them, as through his role, the designated teacher had insight as to the types of provision for CiC which were provided by other agencies. However, that is not to say that actions planned by professionals should be regarded more highly than other sources of support. Indeed, the designated teacher and I considered how naturally occurring sources of resilience in school could be capitalised on, such as CiC’s relationships with peers, because as Newman and Blackburn (2002) have cautioned, care should be taken to ensure that such sources of support are not undervalued, nor weakened, by the activities of professionals. Their research found that when children were asked what helped them to ‘succeed against the odds’, help from members of their extended families, neighbours or informal mentors and positive peer relationships was mentioned more frequently than the involvement of professionals (Newman and Blackburn, ibid.).

It was also helpful that the framework followed for the organisational working, that is the RADIO approach, enabled me to begin to understand the complex ecological and organisational issues faced by CiC, rather than focusing on a narrow within-child approach. My reflections on the RADIO approach will be shared in the following section.

The research highlighted to me the advantages and disadvantages of an EP carrying out research as an outsider to the school. Overall though, consistent with Ashton’s (2009) research, it seemed important that I was an ‘outsider’ to the school. As an
outsider to the school, I felt that I was in a more neutral position to share my views regarding the school’s ethos than I would have been had I been the school’s named TEP. I also feel that being an ‘outsider’ to the school was also advantageous during the research process as this perhaps resulted in staff feeling more comfortable about talking openly about their views. In the evaluation interview with him, the designated teacher spoke positively about me being an ‘outsider’ to the school. He commented that, ‘...sometimes when you’re close to systems, you don’t see how well you’re working or perhaps you don’t see how you could improve the system.’ Thus, I did not experience defensive rejection from the staff I worked with (Winter and Badley, 2007). Certainly, Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) assert that having both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ to schools can promote critical reflection and the action to bring about improvements.

Although the designated teacher spoke positively about the action research and indicated that he would like to see the school’s EP time used for more of this type of work, it is too early to say whether in fact, the school’s EP time will be used in this way in the future. On reflection, because it is ultimately between the school’s SENCo and EP to negotiate how the school’s annual allocation of EP time will be used, it might have been more powerful if the school’s SENCo had been involved in the research. If the SENCo had been involved, then she could have seen at first-hand how action research can impact on the practice of staff.

An issue is that action research can be constrained by the limitations of a time allocation system, which the EPS where I am employed currently has in place. The designated teacher referred to EP time limitations, commenting that this may impact on the development of systems. The school involved in the action research was given the time to be involved in action research in addition to its annual EP time allocation. The school therefore did not have to prioritise the research over other types of EP working. This raises the question of whether the head teacher would have agreed to the research if he had been told that the time would come out of the school’s annual EP time allocation. My experience of working as a TEP indicates that generally schools tend to prefer to use their allocation of hours on individual casework, so although I would like to respond to the question with a, ‘Yes’, real life experience leads me to be
more cynical. Certainly, a common concern raised by SENCos when attempts are made by individual EPs to promote organisational working is that the school’s involvement in this type of work will not leave enough time for individual casework. This creates a barrier to EPs carrying out organisational level working and also implies that some SENCos value individual case work more highly than organisational work. Individual casework is certainly an important and valuable part of the EP’s role. However, my concern is that if individual casework ends up always taking priority, a vicious circle is then created as EPs will find it increasingly difficult to move away from this type of working. It may also reinforce the narrow perception of the role of the EP as a gatekeeper to resources.

It is interesting that following the action research, the designated teacher responded with, ‘Yes, I think so’ to the question asking him whether taking part in the action research had changed how he views the role of the EP. Indeed, without being asked to do this, the designated teacher identified three further opportunities for an EP to develop the practice of staff in relation to CiC. These opportunities were as follows: the EP helping to support the behaviour support team in school; helping staff develop strategies for dealing with pupils’ emotional behavioural issues and staff working with the EP to, ‘...help the pupil to move forwards and make positive strides from where they are to be where they want to be.’ The designated teacher also identified a role for the EP in working at group level with pupils. It thus seems that taking part in the action research led the designated teacher to consider wider opportunities for EPs in supporting the needs of CiC, encompassing not only work at individual and group levels with pupils, but also at a wider level involving staff. This suggests that a possible outcome of organisational working is that it may lead to scope for EPs to undertake further creative work in schools. The hope is that this will create a ripple effect, broadening the perception of the EP’s role.

EPs could have a role in identifying key positive organisational factors in schools which facilitate successful practice (for example, style of leadership, school ethos); then use this as a basis for discussion within schools as a starting point before beginning organisational work. Within schools, there are intrinsic power hierarchies, and therefore I can identify a role for EPs in helping schools to move away from
hierarchical systems towards more inclusive ways of working. Action research is an example of how EPs can support schools to do this. Further, as EPs engage in more organisational work this will develop their practice as they develop their understanding of what the organisational factors are which influence good practice and sustainability in different areas, such as in relation to CiC.

This piece of action research has therefore highlighted to me that there is a need for some EPSs to promote the benefits of organisational working, in particular action research, more actively to schools. In 2000, the DfEE’s report of the Working Group on the current role, good practice and future directions of EPSs, found that a school’s concept of the role of the EP as including school development work and action research may be atypical of schools generally (DfEE, 2000b). Ten years later, it would seem that factors such as the time allocation systems used by some EPSs and possible lack of awareness of the types of work that EPs can offer schools, can inhibit these types of organisational working. Clearly there continues to be a need for EPSs to make schools aware that action research is part of service delivery. If EPSs do not take responsibility for actively promoting action research, then the risk is that they are helping to reinforce MacKay’s (2002) concern that the future of educational psychology will lie within the, ‘...narrow functions of educational psychology in relation to special educational needs and statutory assessment’ (MacKay, 2002, p. 248).

Thus, as Stratford (2000) has suggested, promotion of action research should not be left to individual EPs, but rather EPSs should establish such examples of whole school work as a service priority. This, I agree, would place deeper emphasis on this type of working. In the EPS where Clarke and Jenner (2006) worked, moving from an EPS which, ‘...was historically based on paradigms reflecting within-child deficits’ (Clarke and Jenner, ibid., p. 193) to an EPS which utilised a model of self-organised learning in schools, enabled consultations about individual pupils to be refocused into whole school issues. I recommend that within EPSs, group consultations are held in order to discuss the ways in which EPs can promote action research as part of their remit. It may be helpful for EPSs to develop new models of service delivery and/or possible frameworks for EPs to follow when initiating discussions about organisational level work with a school. For example, asking a SENCo or head teacher what the targets on a
school’s SIP are may be a useful starting point, leading to ‘a way in’ for EPs to negotiate organisational level working.

EPSs may wish to consider how examples of organisational working in schools can be promoted at EPS, school and LA levels. There may also be an issue that some EPs may lack confidence in working at organisational level with schools, particularly if they have become accustomed to working predominantly at an individual level. However, if these issues are addressed through group consultations or yearly Performance Development Appraisals (PDAs) within EPSs, then ways forward can be considered. For example, EPs could be offered training about different ways of systemic working, as part of their CPD.

As well as offering skills in relation to systemic working, EPs have a distinctive role in contributing psychological knowledge. For example, in my piece of action research the psychological knowledge contribution was enabling the designated teacher to reflect on resilience theory and incorporate this into his wider practice, specifically through the school-based PEP interview schedule. The resiliency focus compliments a systems rather than an individual deficit approach. RQ3 will address this issue in more detail.

In summary, there is a role for EPs in developing secondary schools’ practice in relation to CiC through working at an organisational level. Organisational work also has the potential to change perceptions of how school staff may view the role of the EP, as was the case with the designated teacher. This in turn may open up further opportunities for the EP to engage in organisational working within a school. Certainly the designated teacher was able to identify further opportunities for the EP to develop the practice of staff in relation to CiC. It seems that the challenge therefore for EPSs is to develop effective ways of promoting organisational working, especially when potential barriers to this are in place, such as time allocation systems.
5.4: RQ2 - How can action research in a secondary school aimed at developing the school’s practice in relation to CiC impact on organisational working at school and LA levels?

In response to this RQ, I will firstly share my reflections of the action research approach which was followed during this piece of research; that is, the RADIO approach. I will then focus on my reflections of the impact of the action research firstly at school level and then at LA level.

My personal reflections on the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach

The RADIO approach (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003), which was the overall design of my research, was helpful in guiding me through the action research process. As a TEP who had never carried out action research before, I wanted to use an approach which provided me with a clear framework and which I felt would also be clear to the research’s stakeholders. Because the RADIO approach had been developed by EPs for TEPs (Knight and Timmins, 1995), I felt secure using the approach, knowing that it had been designed for university trainees, who were likely to be less experienced in carrying out ‘real world’ research.

I found the RADIO approach clear to follow, with well defined stages. It was thus helpful in structuring my research. I also felt that it provided a clear framework to share with stakeholders. In my initial meeting with stakeholders, I provided each of them with a table depicting the stages and characteristics of the RADIO approach (Appendix E), and I feel that this stimulated discussion between us about the approach, allowing for clarification about each other’s roles within the process. I feel that if I had described the RADIO approach, without providing the table as a visual prompt, the discussion may have been less rich and the collaborative nature of the action research may not have been as strongly promoted. It was my intention that giving the stakeholders access to a visual representation of the anticipated structure of the action research and providing them with time to study it, would help to encourage them to ask questions. In addition, I wanted stakeholders to have a visual reminder of
the RADIO approach to take away with them to look at in their own time should they wish to do so. At each stage of the research, I made a direct link to the stage we were working at in the RADIO approach. If in the future I use the RADIO approach again, I will once more provide stakeholders with a table depicting the stages and characteristics of the approach.

I feel that the wording used by Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly (2003) to depict each stage of the RADIO approach emphasises the need for negotiation, by highlighting the collaborative nature of the research. For example, ‘Clarifying’ (Stage 3), ‘Agreeing’ (Stages 5 and 9), ‘Negotiating’ (Stage 6) and ‘Processing information with...’ (Stage 8) all allude to collaboration. I feel that this resulted in collaboration becoming embedded in the process, rather than something that had to be specifically strived for. This is important, as Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) state,

‘...negotiation of collaborative roles...is not something which occurs before undertaking an action research project: it is a complex and continuing dimension of the project itself’ (p. 13).

For example, at stage 3 of the RADIO approach, ‘Clarifying organisational and cultural issues’, there was a need for negotiation of the timeframe within which to carry out the action research, which had to take into consideration my university deadlines as well as the constraints of staff availability. I feel that negotiation such as this which took place early on in the research, gave a clear sign to stakeholders that negotiation was a naturally occurring part of the process.

I feel that the collaborative aspect which runs through the RADIO approach was a crucial element in enabling the secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC because collaboration emphasises the need for inclusion through exploring the interests and priorities of stakeholders. For example, it was through finding out what the particular interests and priorities of the deputy head teacher and the designated teacher were that the approach based on resilience theory was agreed. This subsequently led to agreement with the designated teacher that the focus of concern would be the development of a school-based PEP interview schedule with its focus on key areas associated with developing resilience, as he suggested that this would be
helpful for developing his practice in supporting the needs of CiC. Had I chosen the focus of concern, it is likely that there would have been less impact on his practice, as individuals are more likely to engage in more effective practices if they are active participants in the research (Robson, 2002).

Although the RADIO approach provided me with a structure which guided me through action research, this does not mean that it was restrictive by imposing certain types of methods of data collection and analysis. Thus, qualitative and quantitative approaches were used during the research process as necessary. This again, allowed for collaboration in determining which methods and analysis should be used.

Ashton (2009), who applied the RADIO approach to five action research projects carried out in schools focusing on the transition of pupils from primary school to secondary school noted the use of what she referred to as ‘step-10 plus’ (Ashton, 2009, p. 228). In this additional step, or stage, the findings in each of the schools were shared with the children and there was discussion of action plans with them. In my piece of research, pupils became involved at Stage 11, when the designated teacher and I trialled the use of the school-based PEP interview schedule with a CiC. The designated teacher also independently trialled the use of the interview schedule with another CiC at this stage. Both of the CiC were asked for their feedback about the interview schedule regarding its content and its format. The designated teacher and I also shared our reflections on the content and our delivery of the interview schedule and how we felt that the CiC had responded to its content and delivery. All of these conversations informed the development of the interview schedule and possible future next steps. However, unlike Ashton’s (ibid.) findings which led her to state that the RADIO approach was ‘missing’ (Ashton, ibid., p. 228) an extra step in which information could be shared with pupils and action plans discussed with them, I feel that active participation of pupils can be incorporated into the pre-existing stages of the RADIO approach. Certainly this was the case in this piece of research.

On reflection, it would have been beneficial if I had collected detailed feedback from stakeholders regarding their opinions specifically about the RADIO approach; for example, whether they would use the approach with other issues within the LA or
school. The designated teacher responded to an evaluation question about the action research process, but he was asked about action research in general terms. However, because the designated teacher had not been involved in an action research project before, it could be argued that he was not in a position to be able to evaluate fully the strengths and limitations of the RADIO approach, as he had not experienced any other action research approaches with which to compare it. Indeed, the same comment could be said about me. From the designated teacher’s feedback, it seemed that the developmental process of the research appealed to him. He perhaps had in mind the school-based PEP interview schedule when he commented, ‘...you try something, you see how it works and you make changes to it as necessary.’ He also shared that he appreciated having opportunities for reflection and that he saw benefits in the collaborative aspect of action research.

From a personal point of view, I can say with assurance that the RADIO approach has given me confidence in carrying out further pieces of action research, and although I would be happy to use the RADIO approach again, I would also be happy to try other approaches to action research.

**How can action research in a secondary school aimed at developing the school’s practice in relation to CiC impact on organisational working at school and LA levels?**

Firstly I will consider how action research in a secondary school aimed at developing the school’s practice in relation to CiC can impact on organisational working at school level. Then I will consider how the action research has impacted on organisational working at LA level.

With regard to the action research in the secondary school, the designated teacher identified some of its general benefits as enabling staff to have opportunities to reflect on practice, providing an opportunity for collaborative working and allowing for the sharing of expertise. He also spoke positively about the developmental process of action research. It seemed to me that the designated teacher most of all welcomed opportunities to reflect on his own practice and on general practices within school, and
it was through these opportunities during the action research that he was able to develop his practice. This may explain why he expressed his liking about the developmental process of action process, which naturally incorporates reflection. The designated teacher’s comment that opportunities for reflection in school can be limited because of the ‘full on’ day-to-day responsibilities of teaching indicates a possible need for the school to facilitate opportunities for staff reflection. As well as action research, other opportunities for this could include staff meetings whereby staff could be encouraged to share materials and then in subsequent meetings reflect on their use.

As well as reflecting on his own practice and on general practices within school, it seemed that the action research empowered the designated teacher to think about the ways that he could incorporate what he knew about resilience theory into a framework. I wanted the designated teacher to see that he was an ‘expert’ and had strengths to be capitalised upon.

Although I did work with key people who had involvement with supporting the needs of CiC, I do feel that it is unfortunate that I did not have the opportunity to work with more members of staff. Difficulties in the recruitment of staff in action research projects because of issues such as funding and staff availability have been noted by other researchers such as Simm and Ingram (2008) and Ashton (2009). The reason I was unable to work with more staff was due to issues of confidentiality about pupils’ ‘in care’ status and staff availability. The deputy head teacher and designated teacher were sensitive to this, and so careful decisions were made about which staff would have involvement in the research.

Working with a greater number of staff, perhaps through establishing focus groups, would have developed my understanding of the views and meanings of more staff in the time available and it also would have possibly developed practice on a wider level in school. One way of addressing the limitations of staff time whilst adhering to the CiC’s right to confidentiality, as discussed with the designated teacher, was the possibility of me carrying out training or group work with staff linked to risk and resilience principles on an INSET day. This was not possible as all of the INSET sessions
for the academic year had been pre-arranged. However, for EPs who are experiencing difficulties in recruiting members of staff fully to action research, INSET can provide a means of enabling a wider number of staff to develop their practice. As Simm and Ingram (2008) noted from their research,

‘...encouraging people to make just small changes to their practice without making a complete commitment to the project [such as engaging in work with an EP or more experienced colleague] enabled their involvement’ (Simm and Ingram, 2008, p. 51).

Had I carried out this training, I would have ensured that I used techniques which would have facilitated participant involvement as much as possible, such as group work exercises, rather than using a purely didactic approach, for as Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004, p. 132) have commented, in terms of styles of working, ‘...the medium is the message.’

A point for consideration is whether more time would have been available for more staff to become involved in the research if improving outcomes for CiC had been highlighted on the current SIP. However although issues related to CiC were not a target on the SIP, the head teacher welcomed my involvement as he identified that the school had a relatively high percentage of CiC compared with other secondary schools in the LA. It therefore would seem that a key factor when carrying out action research is the interest levels of the staff. Linked to this is the issue of ownership. There are clear advantages of research being led by the needs of the stakeholders, rather than the motivation of EPs. I did not want to be the person who decided upon the specific focus of the research. I recognised that if I assumed the role of facilitator and allowed the research to be participant-led, staff motivation and interest would be likely to be higher than if I had pre-planned the direction that the research would go in. The reason for staff’s motivation and interest in the school in which I carried out the research was thus likely to be because of the ‘real life’ aspect of the action research; that is, it addressed the particular needs of staff within the particular secondary school setting, so it had relevance to them.
Of course, a concern that may be raised is that because I worked solely with members of the senior management team, the views of less senior staff were not represented and thus their needs were not addressed. This in turn could have inhibited my micropolitical insight of power issues within school. It has been asserted that for school practice to develop, micropolitical insight is essential (Johnson, 2004). As I did not have the opportunity to work with less senior members of staff, it is in this respect that perhaps it would have been an advantage to be an ‘insider’ to the school. For example, if I had been the school’s named TEP I possibly would have had a more in-depth awareness as to whether there were specific power issues within school.

However, from an ‘outsider’ perspective, my overall impressions of the school are that the school has strong ‘human elements’ such as positive relationships between staff and a nurturing ethos towards pupils. Certainly, I feel that inclusion, fairness, care and compassion towards others, working hard and trying hard, values which are all important to me, are values that the school strives towards. The school’s most recent Ofsted report (2006) also suggests this. The ethos of a school is important; within-school factors, such as unsupportive staff, can provide a barrier to pupils’ participation and learning.

One of the advantages of the two key stakeholders in the school being on the senior management team is that they have the influence in school to move practice forward in relation to CiC. The influence of the stakeholder in school is important for as Ashton (2009) has noted, if key staff are enthusiastic but not in a position to be able to move things forward, action research becomes nothing more than, ‘...an interesting set of papers on a shelf’ (p. 230) without the structures in place to lead to a change in practice (Binnie, Allen and Beck, 2008). Indeed, Binnie et al. (ibid.) have referred to the ‘vital requirement’ (p. 352) that action research is driven by key people within the school system. As the school’s most recent Ofsted report (2006) refers to the, ‘...strong and highly effective leadership’ of the school (Ofsted, ibid., p. 3) and describes the school as, ‘self-evaluating’, I am hopeful that school practice in relation to CiC will strengthen. It is unfortunate that the deputy head teacher was only involved in the early stages of the research; however, it is hoped that this early involvement and the subsequent developments from my work with the designated teacher will enable her
to see the potential of action research in addressing other school issues. The head teacher had also commented to me during my phone call to him at the beginning of the research that he was always open to opportunities for research to be carried out at school.

It therefore seems to me that the leadership style of the head teacher and the senior management team in the school as well as the ethos of the school are enabling factors in developing the practice of staff. I feel that the impact of any action research on organisational working depends on organisational factors such as those suggested. As mentioned previously, before beginning organisational work, such as action research in a school, it may be advisable for an EP to have a general discussion with staff about key positive organisational factors which may facilitate successful practice. This may then alert the EP to any inhibiting factors which may affect the development of whole-school practice, such as power imbalances.

I feel that the action research has impacted on organisational working at school level because changes have been made in aspects of the school’s practice in relation to CiC. For example, it is anticipated that the school-based PEP interview schedule will be used as appropriate during meetings between the designated teacher and CiC, and thus there is in place an approach based on resilience theory principles to support CiC. Through taking part in the research, the designated teacher also had opportunities to reflect on practice and consider ways of developing his practice, which is something he valued. I feel that I have supported the development of the designated teacher’s practice through facilitating the research; sharing psychological theory and providing a framework for carrying out the research.

In terms of the impact of the action research on organisational working at LA level, the team manager for CiC has already identified how the school-based PEP interview schedule may be of benefit at a wider level within the LA. Indeed, she told me that the schedule would be a helpful resource to share with other designated teachers within the LA and is planning on its distribution at upcoming training sessions for designated teachers. She has also asked for it to be placed on the e-portal. In sharing the school-
based PEP interview schedule with other designated teachers, it is hoped that this will raise the profile of organisational working within the EPS.

It is encouraging that the team manager for CiC was positive about the work carried out in the secondary school. It may lead to her seeking future involvement from the EPS for other types of work related to CiC. Certainly, she has already asked whether it would be possible for me to do further work in terms of developing a school-based PEP interview schedule which pupils would complete independently and creating further resources for designated teachers. Although this is something that I would be interested in doing, I feel that any future developments should be done collaboratively, as consistent with my relativist position; I feel that it is through relationships with others that learning takes place. I particularly feel that forming a focus group involving an EP, LA stakeholders, designated teachers and if possible, a CiC, would be beneficial as it would promote multi-agency working and enable a wide range of perspectives to be heard.

It seems to me that that the interest levels of the LA key stakeholders was an important factor on how the action research impacted on organisational level working. I feel that the LA’s team manager for CiC was particularly interested in the findings from the research because she had specifically expressed interest in me carrying out collaborative research in a secondary school. Further, she was in a position to be able to share the findings with designated teachers in different schools across the LA.

It is interesting that although, as stated, the team manager was interested in me carrying out collaborative research in a secondary school; she did not have a specific research area or research framework in mind. This resulted in the research ultimately being driven by the needs of the secondary school. The bottom up nature of the action research created ownership of the research for the stakeholders, which is compatible with the findings from the research by Binnie, Allen and Beck (2008). Binnie et al. (ibid.) also suggest that bottom up approaches may lead to greater opportunity for staff to change their practice. If the team manager for CiC had been more prescriptive about the research that she wanted to be carried out, then it is likely that the school would have had less ownership over it. Further, it may have sent out the message to
the school that there was a power imbalance. As Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2004) commented,

‘...they [LEAs] do create a local rhetoric, set of expectations and style of operation which seem to have an impact on how schools interpret their tasks’ (Ainscow et al., ibid., p. 136).

I feel that the research not only developed the practice of staff and promoted a sense of ownership for the school, but it enabled them in a small way to inform practice within the LA. This is because the school-based PEP interview schedule will be shared on the training days that the team manager for CiC is holding for designated teachers. Further, the team manager for CiC identified value in the research, and thus it is hoped that this will raise the profile of bottom up research in the LA, with schools taking the leading role. Bottom up research is likely to be appealing to school staff because it is likely to have more relevance to staff than research which is ‘owned’ by the EPS or the LA. I feel that the authenticity of the action research appealed to the team manager for CiC; which came about because of its bottom up nature.

This section has therefore considered how the action research in the secondary school aimed at developing the school’s practice in relation to CiC has had an impact on organisational working at school and LA levels. Although at the present time it is only possible to comment on short-term impacts, it is hoped that one of the long-term legacies of the research is that it will promote the benefits of collaborative bottom up research at a whole-school level.

5.5: RQ3 - Can resilience theory contribute to bringing about positive change in the school experiences for CiC?

This section will discuss how resilience theory can contribute to bringing about positive change in the school experiences of CiC and the limitations of the approach.

Resiliency was highlighted to me as an area of interest by both of the key stakeholders within school. The deputy head teacher expressed her view that there are, ‘...huge
benefits to taking an approach based on resiliency. The focus is not on getting caught up in problems, but on moving forwards and working on promoting pupils’ strengths.’

The deputy head teacher at the school had a secure knowledge of resilience theory as she had delivered training at conferences arranged by the LA about developing children and young people’s resilience and about risk and protective factors regarding resiliency. The designated teacher, whom I worked with for most of the visits I was in school, had little knowledge of the literature about resiliency, but it was an area of interest to him. It seemed from my conversations with him that the promotion of resiliency was already implicit through his practice and ethos, but it was intuitive rather than theoretically driven. I therefore spent time with him sharing information from the literature about resiliency, particularly about sources of evidence linked to promoting resilience for CiC (for example, Gilligan, 2000; Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan, 1999). As these authors had practical suggestions for how elements of resilience theory could be put into practice, sharing this information enabled the designated teacher reflect on his own practice and on general practices within school.

The research has shown how information collected on SIMS can be mapped on to key factors associated with resiliency, such as good attendance figures possibly reflecting a CiC’s sense of feeling valued at school and feeling a sense of belonging. However, the reason I have expressed caution by using the word ‘possibly’ is to demonstrate that the interpretation of SIMS data should be done with caution. For example, it could be the case that a CiC has excellent attendance figures, but does not feel valued or feel a sense of belonging at school. Further, as discussed with the deputy head teacher and designated teacher, SIMS data itself can become unreliable if the system is not regularly updated. SIMS data also does not give a holistic picture about a pupil; for example, a pupil’s hobbies and interests are not recorded on the system. All of this demonstrates that it is not possible through global statistics to make assumptions about an individual CiC’s resilience and school experiences. However, SIMS data does provide practitioners with a useful starting point for discussions and can alert staff to possible issues in-school for particular CiC. It can also highlight particular areas in school which seem to be going well for CiC.
With regard to the school-based PEP interview schedule, which was devised with resilience theory in mind, it is too early to say whether its use has contributed to bringing about positive change in the school experiences for CiC. However, I feel that it provides a more thorough means than SIMS of finding out information about the school experiences of CiC in the key areas which the literature suggests can promote resilience for this group of children and young people. Certainly, it is hoped that it demonstrates how resilience theory can be embedded into a framework for practical use in school and how it may contribute to bringing about positive change in CiC’s school experiences. As Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan (1999) have suggested, schools have an important part to play in developing CiC’s resilience. I therefore feel that it is unfortunate that I did not have opportunity to share resiliency principles with more staff and facilitate discussions about ways in which how resilience can be promoted.

The designated teacher perceived the interview schedule to have ‘value’, recognising that it is not just a means of collecting information about individual CiC, but that this information could then be used to bring about positive change for each CiC. For example, the designated teacher suggested that areas of particular need for a CiC could be identified and, as appropriate, discussed with the school’s EP. This feedback suggests that incorporating aspects of resilience theory into an interview schedule is a mechanism through which the designated teacher can obtain an individualised picture of CiC’s needs; an aim he identified at Stage 9 of the RADIO approach. Further, this information can then be used to inform individualised approaches to supporting this group of children, as well as individualised goal setting. Certainly, from the information obtained through carrying out the interview with Rob, the designated teacher and Rob were able to start the process of identifying possible goals for the future.

I did not discuss with the designated teacher specific examples of resilience enhancing activities for CiC as identified in some of the literature in relation to CiC, for example Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan (1999). Had more time been available, it would have been interesting to reflect upon this information with the designated teacher. However, I was mindful that a possible disadvantage of doing so was that it might have influenced any future interventions that the school put in place to promote resilience for CiC and I wanted any interventions to be individually tailored to meet each CiC’s needs.
Certainly individualised approaches to supporting CiC was also highlighted as a need for CiC by the team manager for CiC during my interview with her and it seemed from my reading of the literature that particularly for adolescent CiC, an individualised approach is essential. For example, Colley (2009) asserts that although Nurture Groups, which are designed to link to attachment theory principles, are an increasingly popular intervention in schools for supporting children’s social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; for young people of secondary school age, issues arising during adolescence may mean that an attachment theory perspective is too narrow. Thus Nurture Group interventions may not always be appropriate. Indeed, any ‘one-size fits all’ approach may fail to address particular issues which are unique to each CiC.

I feel that an advantage of the school-based PEP interview schedule is that its use with CiC can help the designated teacher to elicit CiC’s perspectives about a range of issues in school. However, its limitation is that by focusing on specific areas associated with resiliency, it does not cover the full scope of school experiences. Key issues of concern for CiC, which may not be covered in the school-based PEP interview schedule, may therefore be missed. An open question has been included in the interview schedule asking CiC whether there is anything about school that is worrying them and that they would like help with. However, it is acknowledged that this direct question may make some CiC feel ‘put on the spot’. Issues may more naturally arise through discussions linked to different aspects of school experiences.

Another limitation of the school-based PEP interview schedule is that it only captures the opinions of a CiC about their school experiences at a particular moment in time. As CiC may be particularly vulnerable to changes in life circumstances, it is important, as acknowledged by the designated teacher, that key members of staff in schools have an ‘open door’ policy so CiC have the opportunity to share their feelings and concerns as and when they want to. Some CiC may find formal meetings difficult and, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, may find it difficult to think and share their views ‘on the spot’. How the school-based PEP interview schedule is delivered is therefore important. Taking a purposeful, but informal approach to the delivery of the interview schedule, and giving CiC time away to think about specific areas, as appropriate, is encouraged. Perhaps, also, the phrase ‘interview schedule’ may need to
be reconsidered, as the word ‘interview’ for some may have connotations of a formal meeting.

Another limitation of the school-based PEP interview schedule in its current form is that information about CiC is elicited primarily through verbal means when some CiC may prefer to share information non-verbally. This is an area for future development. Indeed, as my position is one of relativism, I am aware that all the findings and outcomes are, ‘...provisional, and open to further testing, critique and modification’ (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006, p. 74).

As stated earlier, it is too early to say whether there will be positive change in the school experiences of CiC as a result of information from the use of the school-based PEP interview schedule being used to inform subsequent interventions. I acknowledge that there are gaps in the literature in terms of evaluated outcomes for CiC and this piece of research cannot currently address that issue. However, it is hoped that incorporating resilience theory into a school-based PEP interview schedule can offer an individualised approach which may contribute to bringing about positive change in the school experiences for CiC. Areas where CiC may need extra support can be identified through the school-based PEP interview schedule and then these areas can be targeted, and progress monitored. The designated teacher indicated that there was a role for the EP in supporting the school staff with the planning of next steps for CiC. If outcomes for CiC improve, then to quote Daniel, Wassell and Gilligan (1999):

‘Resilience theory...could therefore validate practice by offering a sound theoretical basis for purposeful intervention’ (Daniel et al., ibid., p. 14).

I feel that if appropriate support is offered to CiC within school through the addressing of the key areas identified in the school-based PEP interview schedule, then this may ultimately have an impact on educational outcomes for CiC. My study of the literature in relation to CiC highlights the low educational attainment for the majority of CiC over the years (for example, Lambert, Essen and Head, 1977; Fletcher-Campbell, 1997; Jackson, 2001). Certainly, evidence has suggested that when children’s emotional well-being needs have been met, there have been positive effects on their learning (Weare, 2002). The school-based PEP interview schedule enables staff to find out what some of
the needs of CiC are and how the school can address these needs. In the case of some CiC, this may ultimately lead to better educational outcomes for them.

Despite the appeal of a resilience theory approach, the complex systems within which children and young people, their families and professionals live and work in means that it is too simplistic to say that there is ‘one truth’ and one ‘right’ way of supporting this group of children and young people. As stated, as CiC go through adolescence, emotional, behavioural, developmental and cognitive changes will also be occurring. Our understanding of the development of the adolescent brain and the cognitive processes which occur during adolescence has increased over the past decade, but research is still in its initial stages (Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006). As more becomes known about these areas, this may in turn inform approaches used to support young people in school. Thus a resiliency approach can only ever be regarded as one possible approach amongst many others.

5.6: Overall conclusions and future directions

It is hoped that this piece of research has fulfilled the aim of demonstrating how the use of the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) approach has enabled a secondary school to develop its practice in relation to CiC. There were some difficulties along the way such as staff recruitment and availability, but ultimately it is hoped that engaging in this type of research has proved beneficial for all involved by giving participants the opportunity to reflect upon practices and develop new approaches to working. Action research with its focus on negotiating and building coalitions, as well as empowering individuals and giving them ownership over situations (Eilertsen, Gustafson and Salo, 2008) meant that collaborative practice with school staff and LA stakeholders was possible. This led to the sharing of power (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). Through action research I was able to reflect on my practice with a view to improving upon it. I feel that a relativist stance lends itself to action research because of its focus on inclusive practice and on learning through relationships with others. This develops mutually respectful relationships.
It is therefore my opinion that if EPs facilitate action research from a stance of relativism, then this may help settings such as schools to break down power hierarchies that may exist. It is desirable to have involvement from senior and less senior members of staff in action research, but as was the case for my piece of research, this is not always possible. This, I feel, was a limitation of the research. Attempts should therefore be made through action research, and indeed everyday school practice, to reach staff in other ways. Examples of how this could be done may include providing staff with opportunities to reflect on practice, providing opportunities for collaborative working and allowing for the sharing of expertise; all of which were identified as general benefits of action research by the designated teacher.

Action research provides EPs with an organisational approach to working which helps to move away from the role of the EP as the ‘expert’ who works in isolation. This fits in with current thinking, whereby EPs can draw upon the knowledge base of psychological research and theory to recognise the potential of schools for positive change (Dent and Cameron, 2003). Because in action research the EP does not have ownership of the process, schools are empowered to make change as the research is led by their needs. This bottom up approach to research has an authenticity; more so than if the research had been led by the specific interests of the EPS or the LA. This type of research has the potential to strengthen relationships between schools, EPSs and LAs. Although, therefore, I would argue that action research is an effective way for EPs to work with schools; as discussed previously, there are some barriers to this way of working. For example, the constraints of the time allocation system which some EPSs adhere to may limit opportunities for action research.

In terms of future directions, it would be interesting for me to investigate, on a wider level, whether the school-based PEP interview schedule is considered to be a useful tool in eliciting CiC’s views about school and in identifying areas where CiC may need further support. In order to obtain this information, focus groups involving designated teachers could be held. It would be interesting to hear from CiC too; however, for ethical reasons, I feel that it may be more appropriate to meet with CiC individually rather than with a group of CiC. It would also be interesting to gain the perceptions of EPs, school staff, social care workers, foster carers, adoptive parents, pupils and LA
representatives as to whether the school-based PEP interview schedule could be developed for use on a wider level with pupils in schools. As the aim of this piece of research was to develop the practice of staff in the secondary school, involvement from social care workers, foster carers and adoptive parents was not sought. However, I do feel that their involvement would enrich any future developments. Certainly, I agree with the findings from Norgate, Traill and Osborne’s (2008) research; that working with social care workers, foster carers and adoptive parents is an important part of the EP’s role.

I definitely do not regard the school-based PEP interview schedule as a finished product; indeed, I believe, consistent with the epistemological assumptions of action research, that it is open to modification or change. Linked to this is an issue regarding the way in which the school-based PEP is delivered by staff; there is a possible role here for the EP to facilitate opportunities for designated teachers to reflect on their approaches to delivery. It would also be interesting to hear from staff about examples of resiliency promoting interventions which were implemented to support individual CiC following them being identified as a need through the use of the school-based PEP interview schedule.

Although it is hoped that this piece of research has contributed to new knowledge, theory and practice, there are clear directions for future actions. This is positive; indeed, to quote McNiff and Whitehead (2009),

‘Action research resists closure, grounded in a commitment to new beginnings, where each new beginning contains future possibilities’ (McNiff and Whitehead, ibid., p. 110).
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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview questions for the team manager for CiC and VSH

What is your role in supporting the needs of CiC?

Do you feel that you or your organisation has any specific training needs related to the needs of CiC?

What seems to be working well within the LA (or school) in supporting the needs of CiC?

What do you feel are the barriers to supporting the needs of CiC within school?

What else do you feel needs to be done to enable CiC to have more positive school experiences?
Appendix B: Letter for head teacher

Dear XXXXXXXXX,

RE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL (CHILDREN IN CARE)

I am a second year student on the Doctorate in Child and Educational Psychology course at XXXXXXXXX. I am also currently employed by XXXXXXXXX as a Trainee Educational Psychologist.

As part of my course I am looking to carry out action research, with the aim of supporting a secondary school in meeting the needs for secondary school pupils who are ‘in care’. By the term ‘in care’, I am referring to children/young people who are looked after by a local authority.

I have spoken to XXXXXXXXX (team manager for Children in Care (CiC) in XXXXXX) about my research. XXXXX has suggested XXXXXXX School might be a suitable school for me to carry out my research at, as she has identified that the school has a relatively high percentage of CiC compared to other secondary schools in XXXXXXX.

The research will involve me working closely with the school's designated teacher for CiC and will involve problem solving sessions around key factors, which from my study of the literature in this area have been found to improve the school experiences of CiC. It is not anticipated that I will be doing direct work with the children themselves; rather I will be working directly with staff. I am aware of the need to keep research time to a minimum due to the busy school schedule, so arrangements for the research would be negotiated with the designated teacher.
The research time would be in addition to your school’s annual time allocation for Educational Psychology Service involvement and school would be able to access a summary of the research findings. It is hoped that the research will be of long-term benefit to the school.

I hope that you would be willing for your school to participate in this research and that you would be happy for me to contact you about it at a later date. In the meantime, if you have any queries, please feel free to contact me on XXXXXXXX or XXXXXXXX.

Yours sincerely,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Appendix C: Letter to pupil

Hi ________,

I’m XXXXX. I am training to be an Educational Psychologist (EP). This means that I work with children, young people, teachers and parents to help children and young people feel happier at school and do better at school.

I have been asked by XXXXX to do some work with you, as part of a project that I am doing. The project involves me working with teachers to make the experiences of children at secondary school as good as possible. XXXXX and I may do some work that involves talking to you about different aspects of school life. We may talk about how happy you are with your friendships in school and how you like to be rewarded for good work.

When I come to see you at school we would work in a quiet area together but you would still get your break time, and lunch!

Thank you for reading this letter, I hope that you would like to take part in this work with me.

XXXXXXXX

Educational Psychologist in Training

I would/would not like to take part in the work with XXXXX and XXXXX on 8.12.09.

Name...........................................................................................................

Signed...........................................................................................................
Appendix D: Letter to carer

Dear ______________________,

I would like to invite ____________[name of child] to help me with a project looking at how educational psychologists can work with schools to improve the school experiences of children in care. XXXXX (designated teacher for children in care) has suggested that ______________ may benefit from joint working with us in order to help school to find new ways of supporting him.

What does it involve?

I would like to visit ___________ at school. XXXXX and I would like to ask ______________some questions about his views about different aspects of school experiences such as friendships, relationships with teachers and school work. It is hoped that the information that we obtain will inform XXXXX’s next steps in supporting _____________.

This meeting will take place on 8th December 2009.

Who will visit my child?

XXXXX who is a trainee educational psychologist (TEP). An educational psychologist (EP) works with children and young people who are having difficulties at school. This could be because they have a learning need or are experiencing social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. An EP works with parents/carers, teachers and children.
What will happen to the information?

XXXXX and I will reflect on our work with __________. XXXXX would be happy to share this information with you. The information I collect will also be used to write a report about the research project. However, no schools, children or families will be identified in the report in order to keep this information confidential. If your child has had involvement with the Educational Psychology Service before, this information will also be put into their file.

What happens now?

I really hope that __________ will be able to take part in the project. If you would like __________ to take part in the project please fill in the consent form. If you agree to allow __________ to take part in the project but you change your mind later, just let me know and involvement will cease immediately.

If you are not sure about any of the details in this letter, or would like to ask some more questions before replying, please contact me on:

Phone:  ______________________
E-mail:  ______________________
Address:   _____________________

Thank you again for all your help.

Please remember to complete the consent form and return it to XXXXX.
Pupil's name_________________________________________________

Pupil's D/O/B_________________________________________________

PLEASE TICK THE BOX:

I give permission for _______________ to take part in the above project.

I do not give permission for _______________ to take part in the above project.

Print name: ___________________________________________________________________

Signed: ________________________________ (parent or carer)
### Appendix E: Thematic analysis of preliminary interviews

Responses from LA’s team manager for CiC

Responses from LA’s Virtual School Head teacher (VSH) for CiC

#### Awareness-raising

**Levels of training**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Different levels [of training]: one-to-one advice, group training</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usefull training: training on legislative matters, nurture and attachment, SEAL training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘..psychology aspect and the child development aspect are both crucial’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand training for carers and training for designated teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘For example, [carers are] not sure what a Key Stage is, they’re not sure about how to approach a school, when to approach a school, they’re not sure about very simple, basic things, such as applying for a secondary school place. And they think that because a child is looked after, then they will automatically go to the school where the bulk majority of kids go to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘You cannot give hard and fast rules, but we can give advice’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise people’s awareness of resources available for CiC [through training]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We’ve identified the pupils from [names organisation], about whether they’ve got the potential to get to university and then we’ve taken cohorts to [names university] in [names city] for a residential and also to [names university] for a residential... at both of the residential all the kids just said that they now want to go to university</td>
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<tr>
<td>It’s to try to bring a team together, to give advice and to give support. Also about</td>
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raising awareness as well and that’s right across the authority from elected members, other colleagues who work within the authority to the staff in the schools

Raising of awareness amongst senior staff in schools. I’ve been asked to give two presentations to [names association]. That’s an association for secondary school heads, so I’ve done two presentations to my colleagues there. They are now aware of the fact that there are particular needs for LAC

The real people who can make a difference are the designated teachers because they work with the kids on a day-to-day basis

Policies and legislation

Virtual school concept and the appointment of the VSH

Government moves e.g. Ofsted regulations: schools cannot get ‘excellent’ across the board unless they’re ‘excellent’ in their support for vulnerable groups

Keenness of executive director ‘very, very keen that LAC perform as well as they do, and that they get the same life chances that other children do’

Government support – e.g. new Ofsted framework ‘So that is going to give us more emphasis’

Resources – money for laptops, PEAs, funds for training of designated teachers

Sensitivity towards CiC

The role of schools

Having good pastoral systems in place

Ethos of a school – ‘strong, established’

All of the SEAL training and the nurture training is very, very good material. If schools
can grasp that not just on the basic levels, but on the specialist levels, that is what the schools need to be looking at

How schools treat pupils: ‘He moved to this other school, which was very well focused on able students...didn’t have this history of all the negatives; treated him for himself; knew he had emotional vulnerabilities. He quickly was doing very well on the gifted and talented programme he was given, he enjoyed being given responsibilities... it was totally down to the way the school treated him’

Having high expectations

Raising awareness amongst senior staff in schools...of the fact that there are particular needs for LAC

**Flexible, child-centred approach**

<p>| Involving the child: careful conversations with each child about their own circumstances |
| CLA perspective in any planning group |
| Balance of an individual sensitive approach, with very strong systems for supporting in terms of IT and the human support mechanisms |
| Flexibility of protocols, criteria and principles for CLA [is needed] |
| Every child matters, not just as a child, but as to who they are as an individual with unique circumstances |
| The kids want support, but they only want discreet support. They don’t want anything that sets them apart |
| ...For the child to know that the professionals are there for them, to listen and respond to them |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CiC’s self-image and confidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many of them are really struggling with the circumstances they’ve had and the pressures that are ongoing...because of emotional pressure within their own families and their emotional needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example given of a placement move that was ‘detrimental’ to a pupil’s ‘self-image and confidence’ – ‘...we’ve got a lot of moral issues round that [placement moves]; fitting in with the legislation we must be working to prove stability as well as the fact that actually all of us, as human beings, need stability’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s lack of self-belief - ‘barriers can be from the children’s own eyes because of the trauma they’ve experienced in terms of them going into care’ – believe that ‘they’re not successful and indeed, that they never can be successful...That’s the big one, the children’s own view of themselves and their lack of confidence’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Placement breakdowns ‘once the placement breaks down, the child is in a very difficult situation. They don’t know where they’re going to go’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trauma also may explain why higher than national average in terms of percentage of children who have SEN statements</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidentiality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Wrestled’ with confidentiality issue about care status because ‘they [CiC] want to stand on their own two feet and be independent and have a fresh start and not feel stigmatised’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s a very, very fine line...I don’t think that we can make hard and fast rules about it [issues of confidentiality]. It must be done carefully, in careful conversation with each child for their own circumstances...We try to encourage the people involved in the PEP to chat through with the young people what the implications are of keeping it confidential and what can be kept confidential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that there are two ways that we encourage schools to [maintain</td>
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</table>
confidentiality]. There should be good pastoral systems in place that say, ‘This child is vulnerable at the moment and you should address it by…’…A bit like an IEP, but we don’t need to say what the underlying cause is, so there is a pastoral system put in place without saying they’re looked after, or if they are looked after, the right level of information is given to what their particular vulnerabilities are so that the subject teachers or class teachers…are not making wrong assumptions based on ignorance

Treating confidential information sensitively - ‘The advice that we’ve giving to the designated teachers is if they think it’s appropriate for the designated teachers to tell informally that the child is looked after, well ok, but that information has to be treated incredibly sensitively. Because if the teacher doesn't know, they cannot give that extra support’

A lot of the children who are in care do not want anybody else to know that they are in care, certainly any of their friends to know that they’re in care... they just want to be treated like any other child

**Barriers to supporting CiC**

*Circumstantial factors*

**Placement moves: issues regarding ‘moving child from ‘good enough’ to ‘very good’ placement’**

The ‘human element’ e.g. personality types, ethos of carers

Many of them are really struggling with the circumstances they’ve had and the pressures that are ongoing...because of emotional pressure within their own families and their emotional needs

‘Moving from one school to another’, (‘Will they indeed transfer schools, which we know upsets the children?’ [if a placement breaks down])

Placement breakdowns
### Differing priorities and agendas

**CiC ‘fall[ing] between the gaps of protocols, criteria and priorities’**

Some carers not being able to provide CLA with academic support, ‘I understand that around 50% of carers do not have any academic qualifications themselves. So often they don’t know how to support the children. Sometimes they don’t actually give the support in terms of education that they need’

**Multi-agency working - ‘trying to bring individuals together who may have slightly different agendas can be a problem’**

**Pressures from league tables**

‘For people to be there and to deliver…the child to know that the professionals are there for them’

**Interagency working [is needed], ‘but that’s very, very difficult...We know that schools are very, very busy places; we know that social care workers have got massive caseloads, more than the recommended figure’**

### Attitudes of CiC and of other people

**People’s attitudes: ‘irritated’ and ‘dismissive’ of the presenting behaviour of some of the CiC and/or ‘insensitive’; ‘There definitely are people who stick with an attitude of, ‘You’re in care; you mean trouble’; ‘Even staff can be saying things along the lines of, ‘Oh there must be something wrong with you that your mother doesn’t look after you’**

**Powerful to say to people that the children are reacting normally to abnormal situations**

**Break down people’s stereotypes that surround CiC**
Children’s lack of self-belief - ‘barriers can be from the children’s own eyes because of the trauma they’ve experienced in terms of them going into care. Some of them believe that they’re not successful and indeed, that they never can be successful...That’s the big one, the children’s own view of themselves and their lack of confidence’
### Appendix F: Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RADIO stages</th>
<th>Characteristic RADIO activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Awareness of a need</td>
<td>TEP’s contact with LEA/school/EPS manager resulting in identification of potential need for systemic work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Invitation to act</td>
<td>TEP contacts research stakeholders in a position to approve and resource the research role and negotiates role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Clarifying organisational and cultural issues</td>
<td>Initial exploration of factors likely to support or impede the initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Identifying stakeholders in area of need</td>
<td>At this stage, it is useful to identify major stakeholders. Agreeing processes for collaborating with stakeholders for feedback and discussion e.g. coordinating group and initiative coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Agreeing focus of concern (research aims)</td>
<td>Identifying research aims and purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Negotiating framework for information gathering</td>
<td>Issues and decisions regarding methodology, methods, resources and timescales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Gathering information</td>
<td>Information is gathered using agreed methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Processing information with research sponsors/stakeholders</td>
<td>Sharing findings with stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Agreeing areas for future action</td>
<td>Discussing findings in relation to organisation’s needs and identifying areas for action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Action planning</td>
<td>Stakeholder led planning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Implementation/action</td>
<td>Stakeholders facilitating change within organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Evaluating action</td>
<td>Stakeholders reviewing effectiveness of action and possibly requesting further TEP involvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Notes from meeting on 22.10.09 between Trainee Educational Psychologist and Designated teacher for CiC

TEP shared agenda for meeting, including the action research process and key findings from the literature regarding resiliency based approaches to supporting CiC;

XXXXXX shared the induction process for pupils joining the school in Year 7. For example, the distribution of Induction Booklets; the Induction Day. Importance of developing a sense of community and belonging for pupils;

XXXXXX spoke about the school’s behaviour management system – big focus on rewarding positive behaviours and on inclusion. Personalised behaviour management approaches are often used;

XXXXXX and TEP discussed issues related to confidentiality for CiC;

XXXXXX reflected on the relationship the school has with CiC’s social workers;

XXXXXX talked about the importance of a child-centred approach when holding individual meetings with CiC;

XXXXXX talked about how CiC’s individual experiences are very different (e.g. their experiences prior to coming into care; how settled they feel in their placement(s)), and so personalised approaches to supporting the young people are important. One pupil was highlighted anonymously to the TEP as a particular concern to staff, as he seems to be becoming increasingly disengaged in school;

XXXXXX and TEP discussed Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and the online system for PEPs - its advantages and how it could be improved. XXXXXX indicated that he would like to develop a school-based PEP interview schedule for use within school with CiC.

Agreed actions:

XXXXXX to see whether there is an interest from staff, and time available, for TEP to deliver training or group work to staff on risk/resiliency principles or to facilitate discussion about risk and resiliency between members of pastoral staff;
XXXXXX and TEP to think about some of the questions which could be included in the school-based PEP, which are linked to factors associated with resiliency.
Appendix H: Interview schedule for use with CiC

1. REFLECT ON PREVIOUS PEP goals...........

   <Look for positives. Offer praise if the pupil has achieved a goal and for perseverance with remaining goals, as appropriate. If the pupil has not met a goal, consider whether the goal needs changing or whether it needs to broken down into a smaller step>

2. FRIENDSHIPS

   On a scale of 1-10 (with ‘1’ being ‘poor’ and ‘10’ being ‘great’, how highly would you rate the friendships you have made in school)? There is no right or wrong answer – just give your opinion!

   <Ask questions based on the scaling>

   e.g. What would help you to move one place up the scale?

   e.g. I notice you’ve rated your friendships as a ‘4’, that’s obviously higher than a ‘3’, ‘2’ or a ‘1’. What is it about your friendships that seem to be going ok, meaning that you haven’t chosen a lowing rating?

   e.g. What do you think might be a realistic number to aim for over the next term?

   Discuss the rating in relation to the previous year’s rating if applicable>

3. TEACHERS

   On a scale of 1-10 (with ‘1’ being ‘poor’ and ‘10’ being ‘great’, how highly would you rate your relationships with the adults in school)? There is no right or wrong answer – just give your opinion!

   <Ask questions related to the pupil’s choice of scaling, similar to the ones asked in the previous section>
Can you describe what your ideal teacher would be like using a few words....?

Can you think of a member of staff in school who you think is a close fit to the description you have given of your ideal teacher? It would be helpful if you could tell me who this teacher is.

As well as meeting with the designated teacher, would you also find it helpful to have individual meetings with another member of staff at set times throughout the school year? If so, please could you tell me who the staff member is? <Consideration would be needed as to whether the pupil would be given options of staff members who would be available for this, or whether the pupil would nominate somebody>

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4. SCHOOL WORK/GENERAL

What is your favourite lesson? ______________________

What are the main reason(s) why this is your favourite lesson?
____________________

When you do particularly well at school, how do you like to be rewarded? You can put a tick next to one or more of the options below or you might like to give your own idea(s).

Verbal praise from the teachers in front of other pupils

Verbal praise from the teachers, but not in front of other pupils

Non-verbal praise e.g. a thumbs-up

Positive comments written by teachers on your work

Going up to the front of the hall to receive awards during assembly

Receiving stickers

Certificates

Achievement points
Other
option(s)_______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

Remember you can choose more than one option and you can tick as many as you like!

When you do particularly well at school <probably better to include a specific example or negotiate with the individual pupil e.g. if the pupil is awarded a certificate>, is there an adult, or adults, at home and/or at school who you would like to find out about this? For example, through a phone call or a brief note written to them. Who are the adults you would like good news to be shared with? ____________________________

Overall, how would you rate your attendance at school this term? Please circle an answer.

Excellent    Good    Ok    Not particularly good    Not good at all

Overall, how would you rate your behaviour this term? Please circle an answer.

Excellent    Good    Ok    Not particularly good    Not good at all

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
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5. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Are you a member of any lunchtime clubs, after-school or out-of-school clubs? If so, which clubs are you a member of? If you are not currently a member of any clubs, you can leave this space blank _________________________

Would you like to be interested in going to a ‘taster’ session for one of the school clubs named below? A ‘taster’ session is a one-off session, which allows you to attend the club to see whether you enjoy it. Going to a taster session does not mean that you
have to join the club. However, if you do enjoy the club, you may choose to become a full-time member of the club providing there are spaces left. Please put a circle around the names of any club(s) below if you would be interested in taking part in a ‘taster’ session. If none of the clubs take your interest or you are happy with the clubs you already attend and you don't wish to attend any other ones, you can leave this section blank:

**Lunchtime clubs**

*<Name selection of clubs>*

**After-school clubs**

*<Name selection of clubs>*

Are there any clubs that are not offered to pupils at school at the moment, that you would be interested in joining? We can't guarantee that we'll be able to set the clubs up at school, but we can have a look as to whether there are any similar clubs in your local area.

6. **LOOKING AHEAD**

Can you think of up to three goals that you hope to achieve over the next school term. These goals don't have to be too big; small, specific and manageable goals are best!

We can review how these goals are going at the time of our next meeting on *<date>*.

*<The pupil should have a pupil-friendly 'goal card', which they can sign at the bottom, next to the date>*

I hope to

Who could help you to achieve this goal?

How will you know that your goal has been achieved?
I hope to __________________________________________________________

Who would help you to achieve this goal? ____________________________

How will you know that your goal has been achieved? __________________

____________________________________________________________________

I hope to __________________________________________________________

Who would help you to achieve this goal? ____________________________

How will you know that your goal has been achieved? __________________

____________________________________________________________________
Appendix I: Interview schedule for use with CiC

1. **REFLECT ON PREVIOUS PEP goals**

   <Look for positives. Offer praise if the pupil has achieved a goal and for perseverance with remaining goals, as appropriate. If the pupil has not met a goal, consider whether the goal needs changing or whether it needs to be broken down into a smaller step> 

2. **FRIENDSHIPS**

   On a scale of 1-10 (with ‘1’ being ‘poor’ and ‘10’ being ‘great’, how highly would you rate the friendships you have made in school)? There is no right or wrong answer – just give your opinion!

   <Ask questions based on the scaling>

   e.g. What would help you to move one place up the scale?

   e.g. I notice you’ve rated your friendships as a ‘4’, that’s obviously higher than a ‘3’, ‘2’ or a ‘1’. What is it about your friendships that seem to be going ok, meaning that you haven’t chosen a lowing rating?

   e.g. What do you think might be a realistic number to aim for over the next term?

   Discuss the rating in relation to the previous year’s rating if applicable>

3. **TEACHERS**

   On a scale of 1-10 (with ‘1’ being ‘poor’ and ‘10’ being ‘great’, how highly would you rate your relationships with the adults in school)? There is no right or wrong answer – just give your opinion!

   <Ask questions related to the pupil’s choice of scaling, similar to the ones asked in the previous section>
Can you describe what your ideal teacher would be like using a few words....?

Can you think of a member of staff in school who you think is a close fit to the description you have given of your ideal teacher? It would be helpful if you could tell me who this teacher is.

As well as meeting with the designated teacher, would you also find it helpful to have individual meetings with another member of staff at set times throughout the school year? If so, please could you tell me who the staff member is? <Consideration would be needed as to whether the pupil would be given options of staff members who would be available for this, or whether the pupil would nominate somebody>

4. **SCHOOL WORK/GENERAL**

What is your favourite lesson? ______________________

What are the main reason(s) why this is your favourite lesson?
____________________

When you do particularly well at school, how do you like to be rewarded? You can put a tick next to one or more of the options below or you might like to give your own idea(s).

Verbal praise from the teachers in front of other pupils

Verbal praise from the teachers, but not in front of other pupils

The head teacher being informed

Non-verbal praise e.g. a thumbs-up

Positive comments written by teachers on your work

Going up to the front of the hall to receive awards during assembly

Receiving stickers

Certificates
Achievement points

Other option(s) ____________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

Remember you can choose more than one option and you can tick as many as you like!

When you do particularly well at school <probably better to include a specific example or negotiate with the individual pupil e.g. if the pupil is awarded a certificate>, is there an adult, or adults, at home and/or at school who you would like to find out about this? For example, through a phone call or a brief note written to them. Who are the adults you would like good news to be shared with? __________________________

Overall, how would you rate your attendance at school this term? Please circle an answer.

Excellent   Good   Ok   Not particularly good   Not good at all

Overall, how would you rate your punctuality at school this term? Please circle an answer.

Excellent   Good   Ok   Not particularly good   Not good at all

Overall, how would you rate your behaviour this term? Please circle an answer.

Excellent   Good   Ok   Not particularly good   Not good at all

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
5. **EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Are you a member of any lunchtime clubs, after-school or out-of-school clubs? If so, which clubs are you a member of? If you are not currently a member of any clubs, you can leave this space blank ________________________________

Would you like to be interested in going to a ‘taster’ session for one of the school clubs named below? A ‘taster’ session is a one-off session, which allows you to attend the club to see whether you enjoy it. Going to a taster session does not mean that you have to join the club. However, if you do enjoy the club, you may choose to become a full-time member of the club providing there are spaces left *<include other information relevant to school policy, e.g. ‘...and if your carer agrees to it’>*.

Please put a circle around the names of any club(s) below if you would be interested in taking part in a ‘taster’ session. If none of the clubs take your interest or you are happy with the clubs you already attend and you don’t wish to attend any other ones, you can leave this section blank:

Lunchtime clubs

*<Name selection of clubs>*

After-school clubs

*<Name selection of clubs>*

Are there any clubs that are not offered to pupils at school at the moment, that you would be interested in joining? We can’t guarantee that we’ll be able to set the clubs up at school, but we can have a look as to whether there are any similar clubs in your local area. ________________________________

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

6. **SUMMARY**

*<Summarise the information which has been discussed. Focus particularly on the positives and offer praise>*
This ‘Summary’ section will be helpful as a way of leading pupils on to thinking about their future goals in school, as covered in the following section.

7. **LOOKING AHEAD**

Can you think of up to three goals that you hope to achieve over the next school term. These goals don’t have to be too big; small, specific and manageable goals are best!

We can review how these goals are going at the time of our next meeting on *<date>.*

*<The pupil should have a pupil-friendly ‘goal card’, which they can sign at the bottom, next to the date>*

I hope to ____________________________________________________________

Who could help you to achieve this goal? __________________________________

How will you know that your goal has been achieved? _______________________
_____________________________________________________________________

I hope to ____________________________________________________________

Who would help you to achieve this goal? __________________________________

How will you know that your goal has been achieved? _______________________
_____________________________________________________________________

I hope to ____________________________________________________________

Who would help you to achieve this goal? __________________________________

How will you know that your goal has been achieved? _______________________
_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________
Appendix J: Interview questions for the secondary school’s designated teacher for CiC

- What are your reflections on the action research?
- Has taking part in this action research changed how you view the role of the EP?
- Can you think of any ways that the school-based PEP interview schedule could be further developed?
Appendix K: Transcript of interview between TEP and the secondary school's designated teacher for CiC

Page 1

1. TEP: Hi X. What are your reflections on the action research?

2. Designated teacher: Well, I've perceived it as an outside eye looking in. Sometimes when you're close to systems you don't see things...I mean what we value is expertise from other areas. You've got your section of expertise and it's bringing that into the school. As I said, sometimes when you're close to systems, you don't see how well you're working or perhaps you don't see how you could improve the system, especially when it's a system that has been going for a long time and you've been working within it for a long time. So an outside eye looking in. A bit like when you get NQTs coming in and they bring a fresh eye and a fresh perspective and I think that's important. I would like to see more schools go down the route of getting people in and working together. Collaboration is the word I'm looking for...it's a bit like a football team; everybody works together and everybody brings their own expertise. The other thing is, as you've seen today, sometimes this job is full on and it's full on dealing with the people who matter; the pupils. And in the course of the day, having time to think about the things that work, rather than dealing with the day-to-day stuff, is sometimes difficult. As I say getting that outside eye; that is beneficial. What's been important about this is that it's been a developmental process and therefore you try something, you see how it works and you make changes to it as necessary. Again the way that the process has been set up, with chances to reflect, has allowed us to do this. Certainly, I can see the value in the questionnaire we trialled with the young man early on...whether or not it will change how we do things generally, time will tell, but there is value in it...just a bit of tweaking that needs to be done with regard to it. But what it's about, I think, is allowing us to build up information in school, which allows us to manage the time that the person [CiC] has in school with me. Without information that's relevant, you can't manage that time effectively. What it helps us to do [the questionnaire] is to build up a bit of background about the pupil, so in that respect it's brilliant, but I do think that there is a bit of tweaking that needs to be done in terms of making it more manageable for the pupils. Some pupils find it difficult to articulate as part of that process. Maybe it's not the format of the questionnaire, but the way that we need to deliver it.

32. TEP: Yes, there's different learning styles and needs which need to be taken into account... Has taking part in the action research changed how you view the role of the EP?

35. Designated teacher: Yes, I think so. I'm looking at it from a positive point of view. Anything that EPs can do to support us in moving forwards with our ways of working, that's got to be a positive. And as I said before, because teachers are so busy with the day-to-day goings on; it's helpful to have that time. And then you coming in and then going away and taking away bits of information to help develop systems; that's bound to be positive. In terms of the impact that you
Page 2
1. would have, I think that would be down to how much time you could afford to
give us. I know that you’ve given a fair bit of your time to help us, but I know that
3. EP time can be limited.

4. TEP: I think that’s the difficulty. Time is a big issue.
5. You made reference to some of the strengths and limitations of the school-based
6. PEP earlier...can you think of any ways that the school-based PEP interview
7. schedule could be further developed?

8. Designated teacher: I mean maybe...there’s...I mean it’s not just about finding
9. out information about pupils, is it, but also about taking that information and
10. findings ways forward? You know, taking that information and working with the
11. EP to help the pupil to move forwards and make positive strides from where they
12. are to be where they want to be. Perhaps it can be emotional support that they
13. need or behavioural strategies or whatever. They’re the sorts of things that we can
14. tap into. None of us are experts. I mean I’ve come through a certain number of
15. years teaching. I’ve done some postgrad qualifications in behaviour management,
16. but most of the people who are on this team have just been teaching for a number
17. of years and your learning is just on the job learning. So people who have been
18. specifically trained as to how you might deal with certain emotional behavioural
19. issues; that would be of benefit. The information we collect about a pupil, perhaps
20. through the questionnaire could then be used to inform ways of working...the EP
21. working with small groups of kids; helping to support our behaviour support in
22. school...all that would be good stuff.

23. TEP: Ok, thanks. I’ve asked all my questions. Is there anything else that you
24. would like to add?


26. TEP: Great. Thanks again.
Appendix L: School-based PEP interview schedule

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

Possible areas to cover in 'school-based Personal Education Plan (PEP)' interview

This interview schedule has arisen through a collaborative action research project involving XXXXX (Educational Psychologist in Training) and XXXXXXXXXXX (Designated teacher at XXXXXX).

The interview schedule provides teachers with possible areas that they can cover during their discussions with vulnerable pupils, including Children in Care (CiC). It has been designed with the purpose of promoting resiliency. Therefore it covers some of the key school factors/experiences, which can help to promote resilience.

The interview schedule should be adapted as appropriate to meet the needs of the children/young people. For example, some of the language used may be too complicated for some pupils.

The time spent on each section will vary and not all sections will necessarily need to be discussed with pupils every time they meet with the key adult in school; the teacher should use their judgement as to whether all, or some, of the sections should be covered. It is beneficial to go through each of the sections the first time that the interview schedule is used with a pupil. However, no pressure should be placed on pupils to answer particular questions or to expand on what they have said if they are uncomfortable to do so.

*The parts in the schedule which are written in italics are additional descriptive details for the adult, and would not be read out to the pupils.*

1. REFLECT ON PREVIOUS PEP goals............

<Look for positives. Offer praise if the pupil has achieved a goal and for perseverance with remaining goals, as appropriate. If the pupil has not met a goal, consider whether the goal needs changing or whether it needs to broken down into a smaller step>
2. **FRIENDSHIPS**

On a scale of 1-10 (with ‘1’ being ‘poor’ and ‘10’ being ‘great’, how highly would you rate the friendships you have made in school)? There is no right or wrong answer – just give your opinion! *<For all scaling questions, some children may prefer to have a scale of 1-5>*

*<Ask questions based on the scaling>*

*e.g. What would help you to move one place up the scale?*

*e.g. I notice you've rated your friendships as a '4', that's obviously higher than a '3', '2' or a '1'. What is it about your friendships that seem to be going ok, meaning that you haven't chosen a lowing rating?*

*e.g. What do you think might be a realistic number to aim for over the next term?*

*Discuss the rating in relation to the previous year's rating if applicable>*

3. **TEACHERS**

On a scale of 1-10 (with ‘1’ being ‘poor’ and ‘10’ being ‘great’, how highly would you rate your relationships with the adults in school)? There is no right or wrong answer – just give your opinion!

*<Ask questions related to the pupil’s choice of scaling, similar to the ones asked in the previous section>*

Can you describe what your ideal teacher would be like using a few words....?

Can you think of a member of staff in school who you think is a close fit to the description you have given of your ideal teacher? It would be helpful if you could tell me who this teacher is.
As well as meeting with the designated teacher, would you also find it helpful to have individual meetings with another member of staff at set times throughout the school year? If so, please could you tell me who the staff member is? <Consideration would be needed as to whether the pupil would be given options of staff members who would be available for this, or whether the pupil would nominate somebody>

4. SCHOOL WORK/GENERAL

What is your favourite lesson? ______________________

What are the main reason(s) why this is your favourite lesson? ___________________

When you do particularly well at school, how do you like to be rewarded? You can put a tick next to one or more of the options below or you might like to give your own idea(s).

Verbal praise from the teachers in front of other pupils

Verbal praise from the teachers, but not in front of other pupils

The head teacher being informed

Non-verbal praise e.g. a thumbs-up

Positive comments written by teachers on your work

Going up to the front of the hall to receive awards during assembly

Receiving stickers

Certificates

Achievement points

Other option(s) _____________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
Remember you can choose more than one option and you can tick as many as you like!

When you do particularly well at school <probably better to include a specific example or negotiate with the individual pupil e.g. if the pupil is awarded a certificate>, is there an adult, or adults, at home and/or at school who you would like to find out about this? For example, through a phone call or a brief note written to them. Who are the adults you would like good news to be shared with? ________________________________

Is there anything about school that’s worrying you, and that you would like help with? ____________________________________________________________

Is there anything that you feel is holding you back in your learning at school? This could be something that is happening in school or out of school.

Overall, how would you rate your attendance at school this term? Please circle an answer.

Excellent  Good  Ok  Not particularly good  Not good at all

Overall, how would you rate your punctuality at school this term? Please circle an answer.

Excellent  Good  Ok  Not particularly good  Not good at all

Overall, how would you rate your engagement in lessons this term? Please circle an answer. <This term may need explanation or re-wording e.g. ‘interest and involvement’>

Excellent  Good  Ok  Not particularly good  Not good at all
Overall, how would you rate your behaviour this term? Please circle an answer.

Excellent  Good  Ok  Not particularly good  Not good at all

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

5.  EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Are you a member of any lunchtime clubs, after-school or out-of-school clubs? If so, which clubs are you a member of? If you are not currently a member of any clubs, you can leave this space blank _________________________

Would you like to be interested in going to a ‘taster’ session for one of the school clubs named below? A ‘taster’ session is a one-off session, which allows you to attend the club to see whether you enjoy it. Going to a taster session does not mean that you have to join the club. However, if you do enjoy the club, you may choose to become a full-time member of the club providing there are spaces left. Some pupils may like the reassurance of seeing a familiar face at the club. Perhaps a ‘club buddy’ could be decided in advance and/or the pupil could be introduced to one or several some current club member(s) who could talk to them about the club? They may want to ask a friend or adult to come along to the taster session with them.

Please put a circle around the names of any club(s) below if you would be interested in taking part in a ‘taster’ session. If none of the clubs take your interest or you are happy with the clubs you already attend and you don’t wish to attend any other ones, you can leave this section blank:

Lunchtime clubs

<Name selection of clubs>

After-school clubs

<Name selection of clubs>
Are there any clubs that are not offered to pupils at school at the moment, that you would be interested in joining? We can't guarantee that we'll be able to set the clubs up at school, but we can have a look as to whether there are any similar clubs in your local area. ____________________________________________________________

6. SUMMARY

<Summarise the information which has been discussed. Focus particularly on the positives and offer praise. Use checking phrases to allow for clarification from the pupil e.g. ‘Would you agree that your friendships are generally going well?’ ‘It sounds as though you’re having great difficulty in Science and that’s worrying you. Is that right?’ It may be helpful to link back to each section covered. Ask the pupil whether they would like to have opportunity to talk further about any of the issues discussed, and who they would like to do this with>

This ‘Summary’ section will be helpful as a way of leading pupils on to thinking about their future goals in school, as covered in the following section.

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

7. LOOKING AHEAD

Can you think of up to three goals that you hope to achieve over the next school term. These goals don't have to be too big; small, specific and manageable goals are best! <It may be appropriate to have one or two goals instead if the pupil struggles to identify three goals. It’s better for the pupil’s self-esteem to achieve one goal, rather than struggle to achieve three goals! Scaffolding may be required; otherwise the goals may be too broad. The pupil may want some thinking time away from the meeting before they say their goals. Allow them this time>

We can review how these goals are going at the time of our next meeting on <date>.<The pupil should have a pupil-friendly ‘goal card’, which they can sign at the bottom, next to the date>
I hope to _________________________________

Who could help you to achieve this goal? _______________________________

How will you know that your goal has been achieved? _______________________________


I hope to _________________________________

Who would help you to achieve this goal? _______________________________

How will you know that your goal has been achieved? _______________________________


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