

**The planning and implementation of post-school
transitions for young people with special educational
needs**

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Abstract

This study is about the transition planning of young people with special educational needs (SEN) from secondary mainstream and special schools to post-secondary opportunities. Leaving secondary school is the first task related to the transition to adulthood and it has been identified as a particularly complex task for pupils with SEN.

A systematic literature review was undertaken to start to develop a 'map of transition', a framework of positive transition practice. Interviews with key professionals, parents and teachers and pupil case studies were used to generate qualitative data. It was used to analyse transition practice in the real world of schools and the involvement of families, pupils and external services. This study was particularly concerned with understanding any barriers or gaps of transition work. Pupil annual reviews, including those adopting a person-centred format were thematically analysed in terms of their ability to address transition planning and future options.

Results suggest similarities and differences in transition planning practices between mainstream and special schools. In both settings there was appreciable reliance on the Connexions Service. For pupils with SEN in mainstream schools transition planning could be conceptualised as 'invisible transition'. It was not an explicit process, with experiences and access to services likely to be related to schools' perception of need, option pathways and whether or not pupils had a Statement of SEN. In special schools, transition planning was conceptualised as 'visible but blurred'. It centred on gaining external service involvement, with limited focus on transition-related education. In both mainstream and special schools there were difficulties with the compilation of distinct transition plans and their implementation.

Tensions related to unclear roles and responsibilities, difficulties with access to external services and limited post-secondary opportunities were highlighted. This allowed revision and extension of the 'map of transition'. The study leads to suggested improvements to service delivery for young people by schools and other stakeholders.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning

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Abbreviations used in this thesis

ASD:	Autistic spectrum disorder
CAF:	Common Assessment Framework
CAMHS:	Child and adolescent mental health service
CB:	Challenging behaviour
DS:	Down syndrome
EP:	Educational psychologist
LA:	Local Authority
LD:	Learning Disability/Disabilities
LDD:	Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
MLD:	Moderate learning difficulties
OT:	Occupational therapist
PA:	Personal advisor (Connexions)
PCP:	Person Centred Planning
PCR:	Person Centred Review
PMLD:	Profound multiple learning difficulties
SA:	School Action
SA+:	School Action Plus
SAL:	Speech and language difficulties
SALT:	Speech and language therapist
SEBD:	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
SEN:	Special Educational Needs
SLD:	Severe learning difficulties
SpLD:	Specific learning difficulties
WBL:	Work-based Learning

Key terminology used in this thesis

Three levels of support provided to a child are defined in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a):

- **School Action:** is established when a child is identified as needing interventions that are additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's usual differentiated curriculum and strategies.
- **School Action Plus:** is when the child's needs are such that the school needs to seek advice and support from services external to the school.
- **Statement of SEN:** If a child fails to make adequate progress through the support and interventions provided at School Action Plus, the school or parents can make a request for statutory assessment. A Statement of SEN may be issued following this assessment process. This is a legal document that describes the child's needs and the provision required to meet these needs. Some Local Authorities (such as the one as the one in this study) make additional resources available to schools when a Statement is issued. A Statement of SEN is reviewed on an annual basis.

National Curriculum: The national curriculum is a framework of teaching and learning that sets out the subjects taught in schools and the knowledge, skills and understanding required in each subject. The national curriculum is organised in blocks of years called "key stages". There are four key stages (Key Stage 1 – Key Stage 4) that follow from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The EYFS covers education before children reach the age of five. Key Stage 1 and 2 cover the primary school years. Key Stage 3 is equivalent to Years 7, 8 and 9 in secondary school (ages 11 to 14). Key Stage 4 is equivalent to Years 10 and 11 (ages 14 to 16).

Connexions: The Connexions Service in England is a national careers advisory service that helps young people aged 14 to 19 to make informed career choices and to provide information, advice and guidance on Further Education, training and employment. For young people with SEN this service extends to age 25.

Previous research papers submitted for this degree

Research Paper 1: The Use of Cognitive Behaviour Strategies in the Management of Social Anxiety in Asperger Syndrome: An Exploration

This study focussed on the implementation of a cognitive behaviour intervention with a young male adult diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome (AS). The client experienced appreciable social anxiety that led to an increased social isolation and poor self-image. This work explored the potential of cognitive behaviour methods to develop the insight of dysfunctional thoughts about situations, the client himself, and other people. The study sought to investigate the relevance of cognitive behaviour intervention with reducing social anxiety, developing theory of mind and developing coping skills in social situations.

Fifteen sessions were held with the client over a period of six months. This was the only type of intervention received by the client. The participant engaged in preliminary sessions followed by the 'treatment stage'. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was the main methodology employed to discern the psychological essence of the phenomenon, in this case, the personal experience of social anxiety. Administration of self-assessment scales at the preliminary, treatment and immediate post-treatment phases tracked the changes in three areas – anxiety levels, depression and negative attitudes about the future.

The intervention was successful in identifying and developing awareness of dysfunctional thoughts and connecting these with the client's feelings and behaviour. Over time, the participant was helped to engage in social experiences and to help deal more effectively with anxiety. The participant had the opportunity to engage in practising coping skills in sessions and in the community. The intervention was educational and therapeutic, with depression and anxiety decreasing over time.

The study indicates that cognitive behaviour work has a valuable role in helping youths with AS who experience considerable social anxiety, with opportunities for improvement in the areas of emotional literacy, theory of mind and social interpretation.

Research Paper 2: The Assessment of Core CBT skills with people with Learning Disabilities

This study focused on young adults with a learning disability and investigated their ability to carry out tasks deemed essential to access cognitive behavioural work. It aimed to contribute to the development of a more significant evidence base to the application of cognitive behaviour approaches to this specific group of people.

The focus of this study was to explore the concept of emotional literacy from two perspectives, the identification of emotions and the labelling of emotions. It also

aimed to assess students' ability to identify and distinguish thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This work sought to examine whether the presentation of a visual cue helps the latter process.

Previous research in this field is relatively scarce and has focused predominantly on adults. The research shows that verbal ability tends to be associated with the ability to identify and label emotions and to differentiate between thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Research based on young children has shown that visual cues did not improve this latter aspect however.

A counterbalanced repeated measures experimental design was used. Participants were administered an emotions test and a behaviour, thoughts and feelings questionnaire (BTFQ). The participants carried out the BTFQ with and without a visual cue.

Students with higher receptive language skills performed better on the identification and labelling of emotions. Some emotions were easier to identify and label than others. Higher receptive language skills were also associated with a better ability to differentiate thoughts, feelings and behaviours, although students found it hardest to differentiate thoughts most. A visual cue was associated with better performance on the BTFQ. Implications for educational intervention and educational psychology practice are discussed.

Research Paper 3: A map of transition: What are the main elements that make a 'good' transition from secondary to post-secondary opportunities for pupils with SEN?

This systematic literature review considered the move from secondary school at age 16 or 19. Key search terms led were used in PsychINFO and initially yielded a potential of 4111 articles. This was reduced by applying strict inclusion criteria and combining terms using search logic, leading to a more manageable list of 97 relevant articles. The abstracts were read for relevance, and with further refinements, 17 articles were identified for further analysis.

Detailed critical reading of the articles allowed the key influences of schools, outside agencies and families to be identified and synthesised into a 'map of transition'. The potential role of educational psychologists to become involved in supporting this process at local authority level was discussed. There is need for further research to explore how the theoretical map of transition works in the UK.

1 Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Prologue

“Major changes are currently taking place in further education and training initiatives.”

(Corbett & Barton, 1992, p.1)

This study is about transition planning for young people with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disability in secondary mainstream and special schools to post-school opportunities. The time of writing is nearly 20 years on from when Corbett and Barton (1992) wrote the opening sentence of their thought-provoking book ‘A struggle for choice’, that discussed the transition from school for pupils with SEN from a socio-political context. Yet, a decade into the millennium, despite the expansion of further education in the 1990’s, the sentence still holds true to current post-secondary opportunities for pupils with SEN, as they search for an equal place within a labour market characterised by rapid economic and technological changes.

The main time period of this study (November 2009 to January 2011) has witnessed the political shift from New Labour to Conservative-Liberal Democratic coalition governments in the UK. This has instigated national policy change, having impact on the various services and departments concerned with the education and delivery of support to pupils with special educational needs. The time of writing and this study is particularly significant, as the Green Paper ‘Support and Aspiration’, proposing new approaches to working within the field of SEN, has been issued on 9th March 2011 (Department for Education, 2011). It includes a chapter entirely dedicated to the need to address transition planning within the wider context of preparation for adulthood. It is, unquestionably, a phase of change, with important decisions being made by politicians, even as I write.

This introductory chapter is intended to provide the reader with a background to the research and the reasons why I have chosen to focus on the area of transition planning from secondary school for pupils with SEN. I will describe the aspirations

and rationale of this study and provide the context within which the research developed. I conclude this initial introduction with an outline of the thesis structure.

1.2 Why choose to focus on transition from secondary school for pupils with SEN?

From infancy to death, life is characterised by a number of transitions which often involve a process of movement or shift from one environment to another (Rous, Myers, & Stricklin, 2007). One of the major notions of transition is that which considers the move from adolescence into adulthood. Although there have been different ways of conceptualising the transition to adulthood, this work takes the view of transition being a multi-dimensional process that evolves over time (McGinty & Fish, 1992; Mitchell, 1999). This is appropriate considering that the concept of transition to adulthood is now a longer process, with individuals embracing transitions within and between education, training and the labour market (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), 2000).

Pupils with SEN may find leaving secondary school more difficult to understand, negotiate and achieve. Korpi (2008) cites leaving secondary school as one of the two critical times in the education of a child with special needs, with the first being the early intervention period. Others have also identified other transitions as stressful. In educational research for instance, significant attention has been given to within and between school transitions. The primary to secondary school transition is possibly one of the most synonymous with the notion of school transition and has attracted considerable research attention (e.g. Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Maras & Aveling, 2006) as it concerns both secondary schools and their feeder primaries. In the very near future there may be increasing impetus for the various educational stakeholders to shift more focus on transitions that occur at the later teenage years, as compulsory mainstream secondary school will increase to age 17 in 2013 and age 18 from 2014.

Leaving secondary school is perhaps the first task associated with the notion of transition to adulthood. From a developmental psychology perspective, the experience of moving on from secondary school may represent a major challenge, the quality and outcome of which will have an impact on the achievement of future adult identities, such as, gaining employment, living independently and becoming a parent. This view makes this specific transition from school more significant within the life span and is an area to which educational psychology can contribute.

From all the transitions in the course of education, the transition preparation from secondary school is perhaps becoming more of a central area for research within the UK. As well as being important as the foundation stage of the adult years, the increasing instability of the labour market and declining co-ordination between education, training and employment have been extending young people's transition and marking them uncertain times (Heinz, 2009). Hence the preparation of pupils in secondary schools comes under the spot light as the initial phase of social, psychological, occupational and economic development.

Pupils with special needs may be vulnerable at points of transition due to possible lack of those social and emotional skills that enable the development of resilience to cope with change and adapt to new experiences. There are various political views about these difficulties. The medical model of disability will emphasise that the nature of a person's disability creates a condition characterised by skills deficiency. From the viewpoint of the social model of disability however, it can be speculated that the outcome for pupils depends on the way society operates, which can either include or exclude people, making individual difference into disability. Society can enhance risks or protective factors, which could affect vulnerability at transition.

Whichever standpoint one chooses to take, there is the common understanding that transition from secondary school is certainly harder for individuals with SEN. Their varying amounts of intellectual, social and emotional resources may result in different transitional 'tempos' (Myklebust & Batevik, 2005) in comparison to the majority of young people. The duration and quality of these transitions will also be

shaped by the structural and organisational features of the settings with which pupils engage. Hence transition planning within the final years of secondary school are important to explore (McGinty & Fish, 1992). For the purpose of this study, transition planning extends over the last three years of secondary school, from Year 9 to Year 11 in mainstream schools and from Year 12 to Year 14 in special schools.

1.3 Rational for real world research on transition from secondary school for pupils with SEN

For the past decade there has been a wealth of government guidance and policy documents published in the UK, emphasising the importance of positive transition experiences for people with SEN in secondary education. In comparison however, there have been fewer studies that specifically sought to investigate what is happening in the real world of schools and the services they involve in pupils' transition planning. There is less known about whether and how the guidance is translated into practice across various secondary educational settings. Nevertheless, according to Kaehne and Beyer (2009a), transition to post-secondary education and employment for young people with SEN has become a hotly debated issue among professionals in education and support services in the UK.

Researchers in the field of transition have described it as a complex issue for pupils with SEN (Beresford, 2004; Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Hudson, 2006; Mitchell, 1999; Smart, 2004), one that has not been dealt with well in England (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Hudson, 2006) with many young people leaving school without any transition planning (Polat, Kalambouka, Boyle, & Nelson, 2001; Ward, Mallett, Heslop, & Simons, 2003). Young people are said to be poorly prepared to access higher education and other post-school opportunities, with several shortcomings in needs' assessment and aspects such as awareness of their special needs (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), 2003).

Political discourse about increasing young people's participation in FE and training has led to particular focus on those who are not able to access education or employment. This cohort of young people is referred to as NEET (Not in Education,

Employment or Training). NEET figures stood at 10.3% for 16-18 year olds in England at the end of 2008 (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009b). Statistics about activities and experiences of 18 year olds in 2009 show that there were 15% who were NEET (Department for Education, 2010c). These figures suggest that whatever happens at age 17 is likely to be a temporary activity, and with an increase in the NEET population at 18 years, more planning is essential to avoid transition of young people into NEET status.

The statistics also indicate that young people with disabilities in particular, are at high risk of becoming NEET with 22% of 18 year olds who had a disability being NEET (Department for Education, 2010c). While people without SEN are likely to access post-secondary education or employment pathways, individuals with SEN continue to face uncertain futures and high levels of unmet need due to a lack of career opportunities, social isolation and potential unemployment (Beyer, Kaehne, Grey, Sheppard, & Meek, 2008; Burchardt, 2004; Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin, & Johnson, 2009; Sloper et al., 2010) because smooth post-16 transitions seem to be the exception rather than the rule (Dewson, Aston, Bates, Ritchie, & Dyson, 2004).

The resounding message is that much more can be done to improve these young people's experience of transition. With national initiatives to promote pupil achievement and enable wider participation in education, such as the Transition Support Programme within the Aiming High agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2007a) and legislation such as the Education and Skills Act 2008 (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008), I consider it a timely enterprise to investigate this "complex" that transition has the potential to be. Like a growing tree in a forest, this has been a journey that provided me with the opportunity to branch out and gain a thorough view of the processes and practices that are involved in the real world of transition at secondary age.

Statistics published in June 2010 (Department for Education, 2010a) show that in January 2010 20.9% of the school population had SEN. The meaning of SEN is considered in section 1.8. There is, therefore, a radical need for effective structures and practices to help young people make a successful transition to adulthood and

experience meaningful involvement in society. This research work is hence a well-timed attempt to contribute to the on-going consultation in the light of an ambitious chapter 4 within the Green Paper for SEN (Department for Education, 2011).

1.4 The starting point of this work

The research plan for this thesis emanated from a previous small scale literature review about the transition from secondary education for pupils with SEN (Bason, 2009) . The previous critical review focussed on key studies that have contributed to identify factors that promote a good transition for pupils. This work (Bason, 2009) culminated in the construction of a conceptual model or map that highlighted key features of good practice identified in the literature. This ‘map of transition’ (Figure 1.1) was therefore designed to chart the aspects that usually lead to positive transition experiences for pupils with SEN. This helped me to start my academic journey within the area of transition and to be in a better position to develop my research. In the current study additional sources were sought and this is described in the overview of the literature review (p. 33).

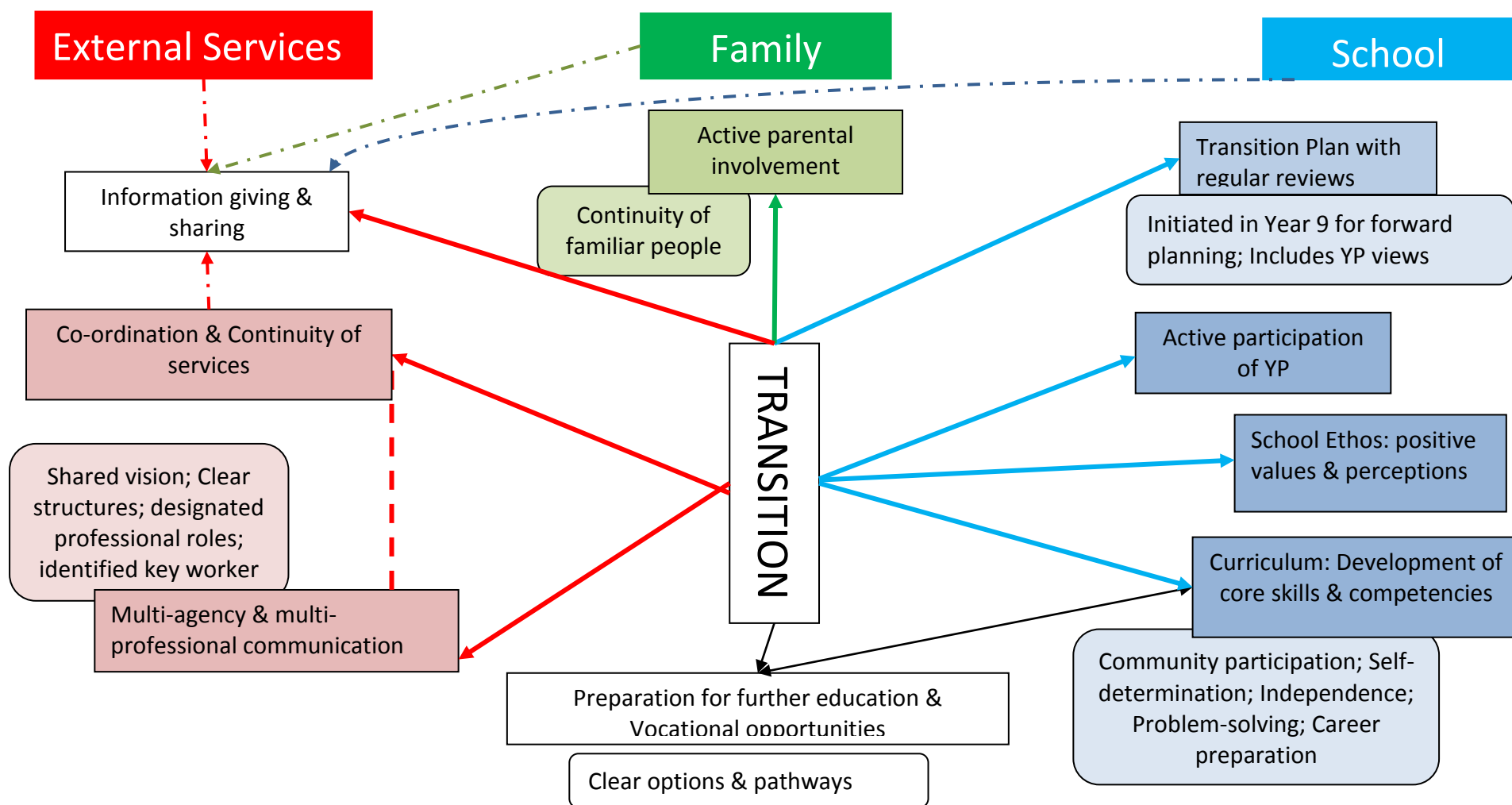


Figure 1-1: Conceptual map of transition

This study takes a social constructivist perspective to transition planning, seeing it as a process that involves various stakeholders, namely the young person, their parents or carers, school staff and professionals from external services. Each has their own view on what transition means for them. This is based on Kelly's view from personal construct psychology that we each seek to make sense of the world and interpret life from that perspective (Kelly, 1955). Reality is socially constructed, and the shared reality that we experience is the point where our construct systems overlap. Investigating transition planning for pupils with SEN therefore requires consideration of the varied contexts created by the organisational and structural factors of the systems within which the pupils interact.

The research methods used in this study have been chosen to provide rich data that could be analysed to give greater understanding of transition processes as epitomised by the research questions. It was important for the methodology to capture aspects within the strands that were of interest to this study, namely the school, pupil, family and external services.

The research process was initiated in November 2009. Initial contact was made with schools to establish engagement with a key person who could participate in an interview, namely the SENCo or head teacher. Data collection was finalised in January 2011 and after this time I have been engaged with the data, previous research and on-going national developments to compile this final manuscript.

1.5 My academic and professional journey

I consider my role as a practitioner educational psychologist within a local authority with knowledge about academic research, to be a well-positioned one in consideration of the area that requires attention. This coincides with the view that academic and practitioner research have a symbiotic relationship whereby existing theory can be investigated within a context to assess its real work impact (Carpenter, 2007). Within the area of SEN and transition post-16, this work may ultimately contribute additional insight that can be used to explore processes,

assess services and provide the forum for developing educational experiences and promoting positive outcomes for pupils.

The methodology chapter includes a detailed section about my role as researcher. It is appropriate to mention here however, the value of seeking to engage in research within natural educational settings. Burden (1997) argues that often vital decisions pertaining to the educational system are taken by politicians and others on the basis of political beliefs, rather than careful reflection on available evidence. The position of the educational psychologist as researcher-practitioner is useful in producing research evidence to influence policy (Lindsay, 2007) and has been promoted to enhance the quality of decision-making processes and resource allocation and to assist in developing the research component of the educational psychologist's work (Greig, 2001).

I am passionate about this work – I wanted to choose an area I was passionate about and which I would enjoy learning more about and which stimulated my critical thinking. I also wanted to select an area which, although it is being considered more prominently, had potential for further development in terms of new research that could ultimately contribute to pupils' futures, to models of service delivery and to the potential development of relatively new areas of involvement for educational psychologists in England.

1.6 The local context

This study is based on data gained within one North West Local Authority in England. The secondary mainstream schools within the LA are characterised by large pupil populations due to recent amalgamations of schools. The fairly new structures of these mainstream schools present an opportunity to investigate how processes like transition planning are shaping up within the framework of building new schools for the future. The special schools have not yet been involved in any structural changes.

Participation was sought from both mainstream and special schools. One of the main reasons for wanting to include both settings was due to the fact that most research carried out has predominantly focussed on pupils attending special

schools. Furthermore, pupils with various SEN are also being included in mainstream schools, creating additional impetus to focus on mainstream schools.

From 2008 the LA had started to pilot the implementation of the person centred approach as a way of facilitating transition-oriented review meetings. In person-centred planning (PCP) the fundamental principle is to maintain the pupil and their family at the centre of the transition process. The pilot within the LA has taken place in two special schools for Year 12 pupils. The authority is planning on increasing the number of what are referred to as person centred reviews (PCRs) for Year 13 in the same special schools and furthermore, would like to extend this framework to other schools, including mainstream schools by 2012. Hence there is a shift to different ways of organising reviews for pupils, and this may impact on the transition planning process for pupils. In the meantime, some schools have continued to carry out reviews in the more traditional way.

1.7 Overview of research design

It is important to explain from the outset that this study is specifically focussed on the transition planning process and not on the outcomes of transition planning for the pupils who took part. Unfortunately, time to track the pupils in the form of a longitudinal study was not available.

This is a qualitative research that adopted a constructivist interpretative paradigm. It consisted of two phases, characterised by different but complementary methodologies that were designed to contribute to the research questions at the basis of the quest of investigating transition planning.

The first phase involved undertaking semi-structured interviews in mainstream and special schools. The other phase was focussed on the selection of pupil case studies within the schools who participated in the first phase. Although the semi-structured interviews were initiated first, both interviews and case studies were carried out concurrently. The pupils were selected according to their forthcoming annual reviews at Year 9 to 11 in mainstream schools and Year 12 or Year 13 in special

schools. The format of pupil reviews differed between mainstream and special schools, since as mentioned earlier, special schools had piloted the delivery of PCRs the previous year to this study. This aspect added another dimension to this study and its enquiry, since it allowed for some comparison between the person centred format and the more customary approaches. The pupil case studies involved various data collection methods, and Chapter 6 presents a profile of each pupil case.

Semi-structured interviews were also carried out with specific professionals who were deemed to have a central role in transition planning. This coincided with both the initial and final stage of the research work.

1.8 Pupils with special educational needs and disability

An understanding of what is meant by SEN and disability in this study is essential. The definition of SEN and disability is anything but straightforward and the consequent labels or diagnosis we give to young people are social constructions that help us categorise people. In essence, however, the term SEN or disability is inclusive of a range of difficulties that people may experience, which may give little indication of the environmental aspects that may be impacting on those difficulties.

In this study the term ‘young people or pupils with SEN’ is used to refer to pupils identified by school with the help of professionals, to have SEN, because they have a learning difficulty that requires some form of additional support. This is in line with the definition provided by the SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a) and the definition provided by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (HMSO, 1995), recently replaced by the Equality Act 2010 (HMSO, 2010).

Children have a learning difficulty if they:

- a. Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or*
- b. Have a disability which prevents them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the LA*

- c. *Are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above, or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them*

(SEN Code of Practice 2001, Section 1.4, p.6)

In the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if:

- *They have a physical or mental impairment*
- *The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities*

(Equality Act 2010, Part 2; Chapter 1, p.4)

Hence the definition of SEN includes adolescents who may have intellectual disability or a developmental disability, such as an ASD. As pupils leave the secondary educational system, they have increasingly been referred to as learners having learning difficulties or disabilities (Learning and Skills Council, 2002). The LDD acronym is often used within further education, training or higher education and is synonymous with SEN. In fact, since 2007 various government policy documents have often used the term young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (e.g. Her Majesty's Government, 2007).

The pupils participating in the case study phase of this work are those who have a Statement of SEN, which includes a description of the pupil's learning difficulty or disability. However, the overall research is ambitious in exploring implications for pupils who have SEN but do not have a Statement. The decision to include mainstream schools in this study was taken to reflect this aspect and the increased presence of pupils with SEN in mainstream education, following the inclusion agenda of the late 1990's. This includes pupils who may or may not have a Statement of SEN. Therefore the first phase of the research is, in fact, concerned with all pupils on the special needs register of schools and with extracting potential differences, if any, in the way in which pupils are supported to make the transition from secondary school.

This study is inclusive of various SEN. This is reflected in the selection of participants in pupil case studies, which was not restricted to one specific condition. In recent times there has been an increasing focus on autistic spectrum conditions (ASD), particularly due to the influence of the media. The last couple of years have also witnessed government statutory guidance specific to support and delivery of services to young people with ASD (Department of Health, 2010a) following the Autism bill that was presented to Parliament in 2009. Pupils with ASD were included in this research, as were others with different special needs.

Although this study does not specifically seek to extract differences across categories of SEN from the small number of case studies included, the advantage of including a wide range of pupil needs embraces the recognition that transition planning is an important process for all pupils with different SEN. The pupil case studies were purposefully selected to highlight how schools respond to pupils with various SEN.

1.9 Aims and aspirations

The aim of this study is to explore the transition process for pupils with SEN as it happens in the real world of mainstream and special schools. The potential of this research is diverse, but it is hoped that contemporary evidence will help to further identify areas of good practice, establish facilitators and barriers to effective transition work and achieve an understanding of why these aspects may be helpful or unhelpful. A greater understanding of the processes could contribute to making informed changes to the initial theoretical map and could ultimately suggest new models of service delivery around transition from secondary education (also referred to as transition 14+) for pupils with SEN. I believe that this topic will require more attention given the uncertain economic and political times ahead.

This work intends to engage the reader in a constructive dialogue based on information derived from the various methods employed in the study. It would be a great achievement if this work has the potential to be a source of additional

evidence that could inform future decisions about the educational system and the services that are linked to transition.

The discussion chapters also reflect my wish to extend this work to further areas, such as the area of career development for pupils with SEN and the developing role of the educational psychologist in transition work and beyond the secondary years.

1.10 The research questions

The intention of this study is to gain answers to the following questions:

1. What aspects of the conceptual ‘map of transition’ can be applied to transition processes in the real world for pupils in special and mainstream schools?
2. What accounts for any underlying barriers to, or gaps in, transition work?
3. Does the introduction of a person-centred review lead to more specific transition plans that address future outcomes for pupils and say how future aspirations may be achieved, compared to regular reviews?

1.11 Overview of the thesis

Chapter 1 has presented the background context to this study.

Chapters 2 and 3 are concerned with presenting a critical literature review. Chapter 2 engages with the central task of examining and discussing the research studies that have addressed the topic of transition planning for pupils with SEN. It includes articles presented in peer reviewed journals, books and academic research reports and distinguishes these from the government documents published. Chapter 3 shifts the lens on person-centred planning and considers this approach from an analytic perspective.

Chapter 4 explains the methodology of this research work. It starts by considering ontological and epistemological aspects, my role as researcher and goes on to give an account of the research journey and the data collection methods. Chapter 5 clarifies the data analysis that led to the results of this study.

Chapter 6 presents pen portraits of the pupils who participated in the case study phase. It provides the reader with important background information that will help make sense of the data.

Chapter 7 presents the results and discussion according to the research questions and Chapter 8 is the concluding discussion which considers the implications of the findings, the limitations of the study and presents reflections and suggestions.

Overview of the Literature Review

“The selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contain information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed.”

(Hart, 2001, p. 3)

Preamble: The journey of the literature review

The literature review continues my journey of academic development and understanding of the chosen topic. The literature review is covered by two chapters which seek to extend and broaden the literature review from the original conceptual ‘map of transition’ and link with the research questions put forward. Figure 1.2 is a representation of the structure of literature review.

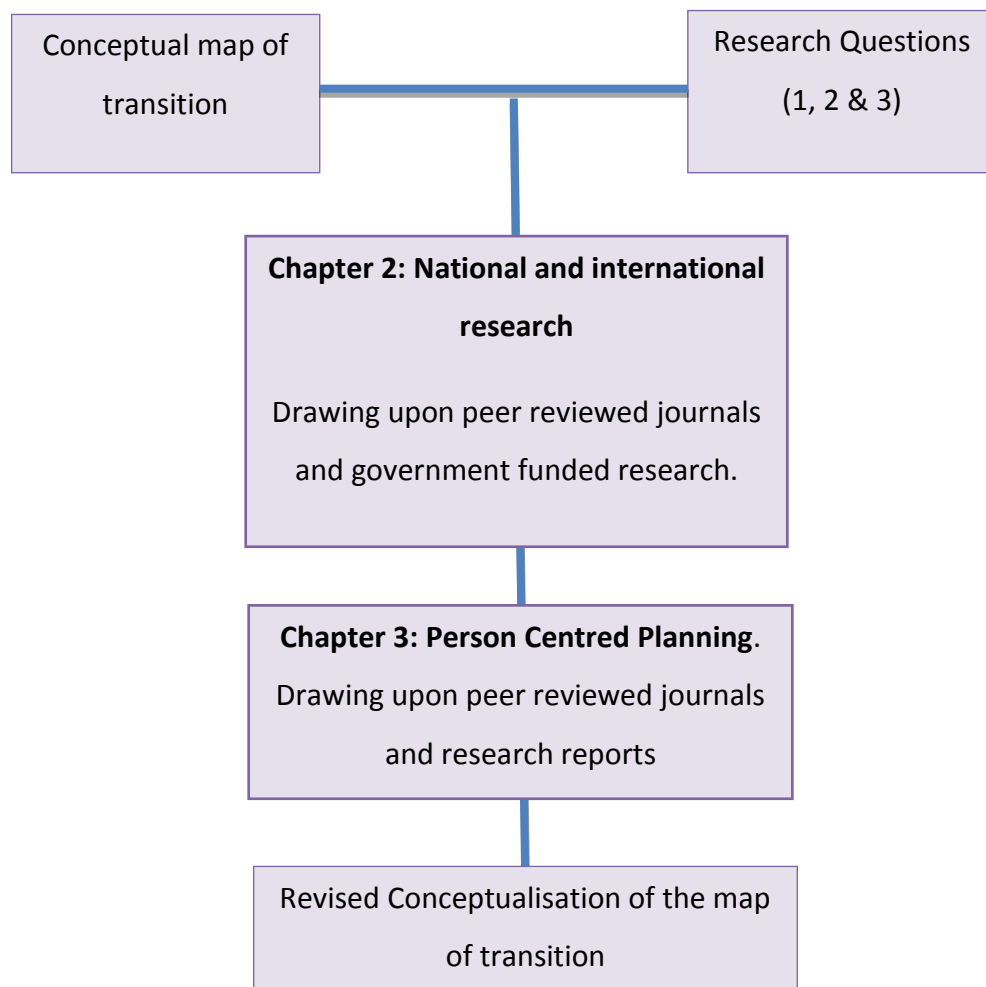


Figure 1-2: Overview of the literature review

A rigorous analysis of the subject literature is presented in Chapter 2. It aims to draw from the research work carried out nationally and internationally to gain greater understanding and constructive discussion about the transition research available. This process also helped to develop further insight into addressing the choice of methodology in my own study, including the data collection techniques and potential topic areas for enquiry within these techniques.

The entire literature review makes relevant links to the range of government documents that have focussed on transition planning throughout the last decade. Transition for young people with SEN from school to further education and employment has been at the centre of UK governmental policy for more than a decade (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2007, 2008; Department for Children Schools and Families & Department of Health, 2007; Department for Education and Skills, 2001a; Department of Health, 2001, 2009). Up to 2010 the documents represent the policy of New Labour. However, with the new administration, various government departments have been experiencing appreciable change in priorities. This political change of scene is starting to bear considerable impact on policy developments within the educational sector and the services related to it. The policies and guidance referred to here are those that continue to have influence whilst acknowledging current developments.

Chapter 3 considers the concept and practice of person-centred planning (PCP). This chapter emerged from the work that was engaged with in chapter 2 and from the drive for person-centred reviews within the LA where this study is being undertaken. There has also been a relatively recent influence in person centred planning within the transition literature.

2 Chapter 2: A review of national and international research work carried out about transition planning and pupils with SEN

2.1 Introduction

The literature search was of a very extensive nature and involved considering transition practice in the UK within an international context. This was characterised by the move from general to more specific journal titles. The specificity of transition research is perhaps best epitomised in the American journal title ‘Career Development for Exceptional Individuals’, where research in the field of secondary transition for pupils with SEN came from a range of topics and utilised a variety of research designs.

It is worth noting that the interpretation of the American research reviewed was engaged with some degree of caution. There were several reasons for this, including, cultural differences between American and British populations, diverse legislation and service delivery pertaining to education and disability, and the definitions used for learning disabilities. Nevertheless, the linking of national and international research was reflective of my intention to invest time and effort to start to create new insights to inform new contributions from my own study.

Research about transition planning for individuals with SEN may be grouped in various categories according to the different ways in which the topic has been studied and because of the cross-disciplinary nature of the subject area. The articles that were considered relevant to this study included those that focussed on post-school outcomes for pupils with SEN, papers discussing the transition to adulthood, articles addressing the career development needs of young people with SEN, and other literature that provided an interesting analysis of transition from the perspective of wider social and educational policy.

A major requirement of this study however, was an in-depth discussion of the research that has focussed on evidence that suggested factors related to successful transition planning from secondary school for pupils with SEN. The initial ‘map of

transition’ (Bason, 2009) illustrated in Chapter 1 was essentially the result of a preliminary exercise aimed at this but was, by no means, the final picture. Within the theme of transition as a process over time, the conceptual ‘map of transition’ established the view that transition work is characterised by procedural dimensions between school, the pupil, the family and external services, and the links between the arrays of practices that happen within and between these entities.

In view of my research questions, the critical discussion of previous work that considers facilitators as well as barriers and gaps of transition preparation from secondary schools is relevant to the quest of identifying and shaping optimal transition practices. This chapter is loosely structured by the domains of the pupil, family, school and external services whilst continuing the task of developing the conceptual map of transition planning. These domains are considered after setting the scene with initial focus on post-secondary outcomes. This first section of this research literature about post-secondary outcomes is undertaken because it clarifies why transition planning in secondary school is an important area of investigation.

2.2 Post-secondary outcomes for pupils with SEN

Determining what is meant by a successful and desirable outcome is important in the context of transition pathways to adulthood. Gaining employment is seen to be a major achievement, one that contributes to the wellbeing and prosperity of both the individual and the larger society. The centrality of employment cannot be dissociated from political influence, linked to what is valued within the labour market. Political influences emerge from a series of government publications and Acts across various sectors (e.g. Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008; Department for Children Schools and Families & Department for Innovation Universities and Skills, 2008; Department for Education, 2011; Department for Education and Skills, 2007b; Department of Health, 2009; Learning and Skills Council, 2006). Two Acts in particular, the Disability Discrimination Act (HMSO, 1995) and more recently, the Equality Act 2010 (HMSO, 2010) have made clear the duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure no discrimination and equal opportunities in all sectors of life, including education and employment.

The Green Paper, 'Support and Aspiration' (Department for Education, 2011) is conspicuous in its emphasis on optimising employment opportunities of people with SEN and disabilities. The employment rate of people with intellectual disabilities remains low at about 10% (DOH 2009) and employment is often not a choice presented to young people with SEN as post-secondary and post-college pathways (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Kaehne & Beyer, 2008), particularly for young people with more severe learning disability, possibly because they may be perceived as 'harder to employ'.

Young people with SEN, in particular, are at high risk of not entering employment, education or training (NEET) and prolonging their NEET status. The recent statistics issued (Department for Education, 2010c) identified pupils with poor qualifications and pupils who had been permanently excluded from school by Year 11 to be at highest risk of NEET; Young people with a disability were more likely to be NEET for more than 12 months with 15% experiencing long periods NEET. A longitudinal study of post-16 transition found 27% of pupils with SEN were in the NEET category, with those with cognition and learning difficulties most highly represented (Aston, Dewson, Loukas, & Dyson, 2006).

Pupils with SEN are not a homogenous group and not all pupils could go on to experience unemployment. Gaining employment continues to be the cornerstone of the life course (Heinz, 2004). May and Hughes (1985) comment that from the perspective of the young person with SEN, the concept of being employable is often seen as a way of acceptance and an opportunity to belong in society. Employment remains a central benchmark for evaluating achievement in the literature and appreciable research related to young people with SEN has originated from this (e.g. Beyer, et al., 2008; Bilson, Price, & Stanley, 2011; Burchardt, 2004; Flannery, Yovanoff, Benz, & Kato, 2008; Gerber & Price, 2003; Hasazi, Johnson, Hasazi, Gordon, & Marc Hull, 1989; May & Hughes, 1985; McConkey & Mezza, 2001). Jahoda, Kemp, Riddell and Banks (2008) also present a detailed paper reviewing 15 studies that sought to assess the psycho-social impact of supported employment on people with intellectual disabilities.

The notion of employment as a successful outcome has been challenged by some researchers like Thomson and Ward (1993), based on the data that shows employment to be an unrealistic outcome particularly for people with severe learning difficulties. They suggest that a consideration of wider indicators, namely quality of life or personal independence, may be more useful. Consequently there have been various studies that have investigated other aspects of quality of life, such as social life amongst transition outcomes along with employment (e.g. Hornby & Kidd, 2001). Thomson and Ward (1993) still recognise, however, that gaining employment is a desirable achievement in adult life.

From a psychological perspective, the role of employment and quality of life are linked within the central concept of identity formation, which is a major task for individuals in transition to adulthood (Erikson, 1968). It is therefore important to recognise, from the start, the inter-relationship between these aspects since this study is not merely about the preparation of pupils for future employment, but it is concerned with the holistic development and well-being of young people. For some adolescents, the presence of SEN can make this developmental task harder to master.

This inter-relationship has been illustrated in the Every Child Matters agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). The ECM plan identified five key outcomes which universal services, such as schools, and targeted and specialist services had to help children and young people accomplish. All five are aimed at promoting general well-being, with 'making a positive contribution' and 'economic well-being' being that which directly relates to increasing the likelihood of gainful employment and a good quality of life. However, although the ECM policy aimed to improve outcomes for all children, it has been criticised about its limited application to children and adolescents with disabilities. Sloper, Beresford and Rabiee (2009) note that some outcomes depend on other fundamental outcomes to be met first, such as maximising a child's communication ability and facilitating the inclusion of a special school in the community. In these researchers' opinion, the ECM plan does not explain the interventions and support that people with conditions such as

Autistic Spectrum Disorders and Degenerative Conditions need to be able to achieve positive outcomes.

Similarly, there seems to be a striking lack of clarity around transition pathways, particularly in relation to links to employment outcomes. An article by Kaehne and Beyer (2008) indicates that for many young people with disabilities, employment did not feature on the agenda of transition reviews at school, even if it was a post-secondary aspiration for carers and young people. Career services like Connexions were weak in terms of advice-giving, and when they did advise they were more likely to recommend a college and FE placement, rather than explore the full range of post-16 opportunities. This confirms Mitchell's (1999) and McConkey and Smyth's (2002) earlier findings from semi-structured interviews, where the overwhelming majority of young people who left special schools remained in some form of FE. A large-scale study using mixed methodology by Heslop, Mallett, Simons and Ward (2002), found few post-school options available to young people with learning difficulties, particularly in relation to forms of employment and housing. Similar to the above studies, Heslop et al., (2002) found that going to college was merely the expected destination rather than something the young person chose. This trend seems to have continued even after the advent of the Connexions service (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003).

Kaehne and Beyer (2008) carried out interviews using semi-structured questionnaires with carers of pupils with LD during their last year in school or college and 6 months after they left. This work was part of a broader UK study on transition to employment (Beyer, et al., 2008). The pupils within their sample came from fourteen special schools and only one mainstream school across six LAs in the UK. Hence this research is largely focussed on those pupils who were in special education. It was noted that the LAs were purposefully chosen because there was provision of some form of dedicated employment or transition service. Although the sample included pupils with ASD and Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), Kaehne and Beyer (2008) fail to give information about whether any of these pupils were amongst the low percentage who went on to achieve paid employment. The researchers encouraged the early involvement of employment

organisations in the planning process because they suggest that there is a bias towards college.

This bias is made more explicit in Beyer and Kaehne (2008). The latter paper investigated the vocational input received by pupils with LD during their last school year, linking this with later employment outcomes. From a sample of 87 pupils only 18 (21%) were found to be employed six months after leaving school. Although mainstream pupils were a minority in the sample, 10 of the 18 pupils had attended mainstream, six attended college and only two were in special schools. This indicates that attending a mainstream school could present with better vocational opportunities. The researchers identified two factors that may play a role in the pupils' likelihood of employment – the combination of well-structured work awareness training and supported work experience in the last year of school. However, these features were provided by external employment agencies.

The mainstream school in Beyer and Kaehne's (2008) study had all of its school-based vocational activity carried out in the form of qualification courses, which seem to be accessed to a lesser degree in special settings. Aspects like work awareness and work experience did not feature generally within the mainstream school when compared to the special schools, which tended to provide these within, rather than outside their schools. So it appears that opportunities and nature of vocational activities could vary between mainstream and special provision, and the direct role schools have with providing 'career and employment education' within transition planning is questionable, although this is not really challenged further by the researchers in their discussion of findings.

New Labour policy that has emerged led to new qualification routes and a drive for young people to continue in compulsory education or training when they leave secondary school. With 'the widening participation agenda', more young people are extending their educational journeys, including people with SEN and disabilities. This endorses the bias of moving to college expressed by Beyer and Kaehne (2008) and Heslop et al. (2002), and could explain why Connexions favour a college placement. This means that moving from school straight to work is unlikely to be

the norm and transition to post-16 education becomes the first of a series of transitions until possible employment. Wehman(2001), a pioneer in the field of transition, looks at college as a first goal for pupils with SEN. He argues that college is an important experience and outcome that can make a difference to possible employment, personal, social and emotional development. Similarly, McConkey and Mezza (2001) support college attendance because it could have a positive impact on pupils' aspirations for jobs.

But even when FE is recommended and pursued for pupils with SEN, is there an understanding about how this pathway fits within a long term plan for the future? The phenomenon of prolonged education could be seen as a way of acquiring qualifications and skills to be able to compete in the world of work. Is this really happening for pupils with SEN? The NEET figures mentioned earlier suggest that possibly it is not and therefore, the college pathway may not necessarily guarantee meaningful experiences and progress that promote positive opportunities in the future, but it becomes, in essence, a short-term solution to disengagement.

Despite his support for college attendance, Wehman (2002) focused on US studies to emphasise the fact that even when pupils manage to enrol in post-secondary education it takes them longer to finish their courses, after which employment is still remotely available. A small-scale (n=24) UK study carried out by Hornby and Kidd (2001) found that although most of the young people with moderate learning difficulties attended FE college and half of them obtained qualifications, it had not led to most of them gaining employment. In an earlier study based on the post-school outcomes of pupils (n=47) with moderate learning difficulties, Freshwater and Leyden (1989) state that about 71% of young people who went to college did not think it was helpful to get a job. A more recent qualitative study of 15 young people with learning disabilities from five local authorities moving from out-of-borough residential schools or colleges, by Heslop and Abbott (2008), found that 4 pupils left with nowhere to move on to, and although half transferred to a mainstream FE college, there was no consideration of future work prospects. Despite increasing employment opportunities in visionary documents, it appears that there is limited understanding about how staying on in education can enhance

employment options and independence skills. There is limited information about other meaningful pathways for those who do not make it to further education. Although disability is a characteristic that has been increasingly linked to FE participation (Department for Education, 2010c) there were still about 72% of young people with a disability who were not in FE in 2009. This means an increasing amount of pupils are not accessing FE or employment after secondary school, even though the government seems to have been trying to promote an inclusive supported employment model for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within the FE system (Learning and Skills Council, 2009b). This raises questions about the quality of FE courses and other opportunities available for young people with SEN.

The aspiration for FE, employment and the achievement of positive life outcomes outlined so far present more scope for exploring how pupils with SEN are helped to prepare for adulthood and post-16. Intrinsic to this is the need to gain more understanding about what is happening at secondary transition and how this help can be improved. Hence the view of the school as a central opportunity structure in shaping pupil futures emerges.

This initial focus on transition pathways and particularly, those linked to quality of life outcomes, starts to set out the features that are important to transition planning. To capture the meaning of post-secondary outcomes discussed within this first section, the following definition of transition by Halpern (1994) is appropriate:

Transition refers to a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participating in post-secondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community, and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships. The process of enhancing transition involves the participation and co-ordination of school programmes, adult agency services and natural supports within the community.

(Halpern, 1994, p. 117)

So transition planning is the process that aims to achieve goals within the areas of post-secondary education and training, employment, independent living and community participation.

Forthcoming sections aim to continue discussing and reflecting on the theoretical features of the above definition to expand the initial conceptual map of transition. The domains of the family, the pupil, external services and the school are helpful ways of organising this chapter, but the process of developing the conceptual map led to the discussion of further issues that may consider aspects that overlap across domains. For example, it is difficult to talk about pupil aspects without mentioning the school within which pupils spend most of their day; hence discussions around pupil involvement may appear in both pupil and school sections.

2.3 Family involvement in transition planning

The concept of parent partnership has permeated every aspect of service delivery in the field of SEN (Bason, 2009) and parents play a crucial role in transition processes. Parents, particularly those of pupils with severe LD, will identify various hazards as their child approaches school leaving age (Goupil, Tassé, Garcin, & Doré, 2002; McConkey & Smyth, 2003) and are likely to benefit from support by professionals. Simultaneously, there is the need to discuss and plan for the future of their adolescents, especially if pupils are not always able to communicate effectively. Although parents and pupils may not always share similar constructions of transition goals, both pupils and parents are likely to perceive family involvement as helpful rather than getting in the way at transition (K. Powers, Greenen, & Powers, 2009).

The quality of partnership between parents and schools and between parents and other stakeholders is likely to be determined by the extent to which they are involved in the transition planning process and this has been a tenuous feature in the literature. A large UK evaluative study on transition planning by Ward et al., (2003) found that two-thirds of parents reported significant involvement in planning for their adolescent's future, whereas one third felt minimally involved. It is worth noting that only a minority of their adolescents had experienced

mainstream education (4%) so this study may, in part, reflect parental involvement within special schools.

Within Ward et al.'s study, in-depth interviews with a smaller sample of parents (n=27) noted that although the transition planning process may have had a positive start, there was little follow-up. For example, only two-fifths of parents received a copy of a written transition plan. The feedback from over a third of parents also showed that parents had to take initiative themselves to find information about transition or transition services. Ward et al.'s (2003) study is important because it sent key messages to LAs and services - it identified a mismatch between what parents think is helpful to them and their child and what they seem to get. It also showed a lack of adherence to statutory guidance.

The co-ordination of the transition process was one of the main areas identified by parents that required improvement. Parents suggested that this could be better if a named co-ordinator for each family, such as the Connexions PA was appointed. Similar views were expressed by other researchers (e.g. Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Heslop, et al., 2002; Smart, 2004). A recent study by Sloper et al., (2010) that aimed to investigate multi-agency transition services for young people with disabilities and those with complex health needs, found that from 34 LAs that had multi-agency services, 11 did not provide a transition or key worker. For the 23 LAs who said they did, 5 did not provide any data and the rest, had rather patchy information indicating that the number of young people who had a transition worker varied widely. In some services, there was only one transition worker for a given geographical area or school attended. Transition workers tended to be either social workers or Connexions workers.

Three main issues emerge from research work, with implications for parental involvement:

- lack of information given to parents about the transition process
- weaknesses related to transition planning meetings
- limited post-16 options available for their children.

The need for accurate information: The lack of information at transition led to various studies outlining the availability of information as a key indicator of good practice. A comprehensive account of information needs of both young people and their parents is provided by Townsley (2004) and Tarleton and Ward (2005). Their research, based in England and Wales, established that parents need a range of information including:

- What is transition and who is involved?
- What rights, entitlements and procedures exist at a national level and how are these translated locally?
- What are the roles of services available to young people and their families?
- What are the future opportunities available to the young person?

The timing of information is also of essence, with information needed as early on as possible (Kaehne & Beyer, 2008; Smart, 2004). The dearth of information available to parents was also reported after young people left secondary school (Hornby & Kidd, 2001). This may exacerbate parental stress in the absence of the presumed stability that the secondary school offered.

Transition planning meetings: Abbott and Heslop (2009) noted that transition planning is often merely an additional part of a review, rather than an event in its own right. From observations of annual reviews, Dee (2006) found that schools can find it difficult to manage discussing transition planning within regular annual reviews aimed to review a pupil's Statement of SEN. She also raises questions about the place of formal review meetings in discussing and resolving difficult issues.

In-depth interviews carried out within Heslop et al.'s (2002) study identified several weaknesses related to the organisation of reviews within schools. This included the timing of reviews, their frequency, absence of key professionals and the provision of accurate, up to date information about transition within the meetings. It would be reasonable to predict that if professionals from services do not attend meetings, parents may have little opportunity to discuss future needs and possible placements. It would therefore be useful to explore the extent to which the advent of person-centred reviews has helped to improve transition planning for young

people with SEN, as the personalisation agenda advocated by government policies suggests (e.g. Department of Health, 2001, 2009).

Limited post-16 options: Kaehne and Beyer (2008) highlight the issue that post-secondary outcomes that become a reality are often those preferred by careers services within LAs, rather than what the pupil or parent wanted. This could be determined by that which is available and funding opportunities, placing parents in a less powerful position and questioning the prospect of choice. Availability of options can also be related to the perceived abilities or disabilities of the pupil. In the case of pupils with severe learning disabilities there are less opportunities (Smart, 2004) and the majority of parents tend to be only offered the option of day or resource centres (McConkey & Smyth, 2002). Abbott and Heslop (2009) talk about 'the road to nowhere' to represent the lack of post-school, and particularly, post-college placements. Kaehne and Beyer (2009b) also view college as a destination that merely reflects a smoother path for professionals to organise at a strategic level rather than a destination that is ultimately more rewarding to the pupil. Dee (2006) states that there is a complex interaction of factors underlying decision-making and it has become more of a public than a private process for pupils with SEN.

It would be useful to gain insight into additional contemporary parental perspectives within both the mainstream and special sectors. Powers et al., (2009) suggest that more precise assessment of parents' and students' expectations and wishes at transition is required.

2.4 The involvement of the pupil in transition planning

The initial conceptualisation exercise about good practice at transition in Bason (2009) identified the participation of the young person as a salient feature of transition planning. But what is meant by participation and involvement needs further consideration. Both the UK's SEN 2001 Code of Practice and the US 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, emphasise pupil involvement. This takes the form of seeking and recording young people's views, their interests and pupil involvement in annual reviews to contribute to their own planning. The SEN Code of

Practice also states that transition planning necessitates young people being offered accurate information on the options available to them (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a Section 3.16 p. 29) so they can then have a voice in discussing the issues that affect them.

Research suggests that practice in the area of including the views of young people is mixed however, with views not necessarily filtering through to transition plans, reviews or transition meetings (Heslop & Abbott, 2008) or in classroom practice (Shevlin & Rose, 2008). Kaehne and Beyer (2008) identified reluctance to explore the choices and preferences of young people with learning disability. Smart (2004) found young people to be less involved than their parents, by the special schools participating in her small scale survey. Studies also note differences across disability types with pupils with developmental disabilities least involved (K. M. Powers et al., 2005). Participation in annual reviews and involvement in decision-making processes about post-school placements is particularly lacking for pupils with significant LD, behaviour problems and limited communication (Carnaby, Lewis, Martin, Naylor, & Stewart, 2003; McConkey & Smyth, 2002). Ward et al., (2003) found that even when there was transition planning, 42% of reviews were said to have minimal pupil involvement. The pupil's disability has often been cited as the reason for their absence in meetings (Goupil, et al., 2002)

The lack of pupil involvement is reflected in what the literature expresses as inadequacy of pupils' self-advocacy skills. Janiga and Costenbader (2002) recommend that secondary school staff need to provide pupils with an understanding of their strengths, weaknesses and the specific support or adaptations they will require to pursue FE . This may be more achievable with developments in alternative and augmentative communication systems.

The use of a variety of visual aids has been shown to have a positive impact on the quality of pupil involvement in annual reviews (Carnaby, et al., 2003; Hayes, 2004). Some researchers have also explored the use of communication aids to facilitate tasks at transition (e.g. Newton et al., 2006). So the extent to which special, and particularly mainstream educational settings, are geared up in terms of the

availability and proficiency in using additional resources will have an impact on pupil involvement. It was interesting to note the use of visual resources to involve pupils with SEN in studies related to transition. Attempts to improve pupil involvement include person-centred planning which will be discussed later.

2.4.1 The connection between pupil involvement and pupil aspirations

Active involvement may be viewed as a skill that requires development via support across the curriculum. It may also be facilitated within the wider remit of developing pupils' aspirations and motivations, which was highlighted as a neglected area of practice earlier in this chapter (p.38). It also transpires that mainstream research linking young people's aspirations to their later occupations is fairly scarce (Yates, Harris, Sabates, & Staff, 2011).

Burchardt (2004) looked at factors associated with positive aspirations of disabled young persons' future education and employment, and whether these differed from the aspirations of their non-disabled peers. Her results indicated that disabled people felt less confident and less well supported in planning for the future. They also had lower expectations around employment. Similarly, in Polat, Kalambouka, Boyle and Nelson's (2001) large-scale study, low aspirations and future expectations were found for special school pupils when compared to mainstream pupils, with high severity of difficulties being the main reason cited. Shah (2005) also found that post-school options for pupils in mainstream schools seemed more connected with their career and educational aspirations. On the other hand, the post-school options of pupils in special schools tended to be linked to their physical needs.

Yates et al. (2011) emphasised the importance of raising young peoples' aspirations, although their research was not related to SEN. They found that young people with uncertain career aspirations and young people whose career aspirations and educational expectations were misaligned were more likely to experience difficulty with transition and become NEET.

However, it is important to note that in Yates et al.'s study, young males from low socio-economic backgrounds emerged at greatest risk of uncertain aspirations and

NEET. Socio-economic background could therefore be an important variable that can influence pupil aspirations and ambitions, and impact on the quality of transition outcomes more particularly in males than females. This may suggest features of the social system as having some degree of bearing on individual pupil transitions and it also directs attention to the role of the school in raising aspirations for pupils coming from low socio-economic backgrounds.

I will return to the implications relevant to secondary schools further on in the school section.

2.5 The impact of individual psychological factors on transition outcomes

Studies that focus principally on the aspirations and motivations of young people with SEN at transition from secondary school are relatively scarce. It is uncertain whether this could be linked to limited participation of pupils in planning for their own futures, or whether this is associated with the emerging fact that progression to college has become the most obvious outcome/pathway that is supported by those working with pupils. However, motivation has been identified as having potential to determine whether people with LD gain employment. UK research by Hensel, Stenfort-Kroese and Rose (2007) found that motivation could be important not just in gaining but also in maintaining employment. The research was based on 60 participants, 44 of which were adults with intellectual disability. However, there were several methodological flaws in this study; for instance, only one of four sections of the questionnaire measuring motivation had satisfactory psychometric properties, and the researchers ignored the impact that other aspects (e.g. family influence) could have had on employment outcome. This study did indicate however, that employment could be seen as a way of achieving worth in society by people with intellectual disability.

A more recent qualitative study used visual communication aids to help explore employment motivation with 10 adults with mild learning disabilities who attended supported learning courses at a FE college in England. Andrews and Rose (2010) found three factors related to employment motivation: monetary gain, social contact and perceived competence.

Another earlier study by Rose, Saunders, Hensel and Stenfert-Kroese (2005) suggests that incorporating motivational strategies and motivational interviewing in the work of employment agencies could increase employment outcomes. This study, based within an agency providing supported employment, indicated that the employment consultant may depend on mere subjective judgments about a person's motivation to gain work, and that these judgments then also impact on the extent to which individuals are helped. Subjective views also determined young peoples' literacy and numeracy skills, and there were no objective assessments carried out to determine the nature of one's intellectual strengths and weaknesses. Assumptions about motivation were characterised by a lack of thorough assessment and understanding of a person's personal and life skills and cognitive strengths/weaknesses. This study is therefore interesting from the point of view of identifying and establishing ways in which employment agencies may improve their practices with supporting people to prepare for and gain employment, such as by commissioning professional assessments.

These studies about motivation can be seen to be relevant only to the specific characteristics of the groups involved, but they are important because they generate reflections about the extent to which educational settings involve pupils and attend to psychological factors as they prepare young people for transition. Additionally these studies raise thoughts about the quality of information secondary schools provide as part of a pupil's transition planning. My reflections therefore, rest in their implications for earlier work at secondary level that incorporates attention to these aspects within transition planning. There may also be scope for professionals to contribute to these factors at both strategic and pupil levels. This development may warrant further discussion later on in this thesis.

2.6 Person-centred planning

Person-centred planning (PCP) has been viewed as a superior example of young persons' involvement because the fundamental principle of this approach is to maintain the individual pupil and his or her family at the centre of the transition planning process. PCP attempts to address some of the weaknesses identified in previous studies since it promotes active involvement of pupils and parents, and

encourages professionals to collaborate and share information, providing an objective basis to joint post-secondary transition planning.

The implementation of PCP is essentially driven by the personalisation agenda advocated by adult social and health services in various government documents (Department of Health, 2001, 2009). Due to the growing interest in PCP within transition and its relevance to this study (particularly, Research Question 3), Chapter 3 is entirely dedicated to this framework.

2.7 External Services

By external services is meant those services or agencies that are not part of the school organisational structure, which work with pupils, schools and families to support positive transition experiences and outcomes. Examples of external services include Connexions, Children's Social Services, Adult Social Care, Health Services (including CAMHS and adult mental health services) and other LA Services (e.g. Sensory Impairment Service, Educational Psychology Service, etc.). The relationship and co-ordination of services (intra-relationships) and the relationship of services with other entities, such as parents and schools (inter-relationships) are both of interest here.

The complexity of transition planning is increased by the experience of institutional transitions (Mitchell, 1999), such as the requirement for young people to transfer from children's social services to adult social care, and from the paediatric health services to adult health and learning disability services. This may be more explicit in transition planning processes in special schools. A reason for this includes the fact that pupils in special schools are more likely to have complex care needs, which by their very nature will necessitate specific external services. Additionally, pupils currently leave a mainstream school at 16 years of age and the time pupils leave may not coincide with other "service junctions".

It was interesting to note that longitudinal studies that followed up pupils after leaving secondary school were characterised by considerable attrition, were pupils

were consequently unknown or lost to external services (e.g. Caton & Kagan, 2006; Freshwater & Leyden, 1989; Thomson & Ward, 1993). It appears that those pupils having mild to moderate SEN were the most risk of attrition. This suggests that in the transition to adult services there could be pupils who “slip through the net”, particularly if they may lack a particular ‘medical label’ that could make them more identifiable. This phenomenon may be attributed to the more predominant medical categorisation of conditions adopted by adult health and social care departments. From this perspective, one would not be blamed for thinking that a label, or Statement of SEN that could include reference to a label, can make a pupil more visible at transition, particularly with regards to pupils in mainstream schools. However, it also suggests that particular service ideologies can influence the roles agencies perceive for themselves, the way they work, and possibly their selectivity of pupils.

In adult services this selectivity of young people has been influenced by the definition of disability within the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). A problem that emerges is that pupils with SEN within schools, who may not have a distinct label, may become unknown to the adult service system because they may not fit into the categories of disability they cater for. The broad use of the term SEN and the endeavour of inclusive education to move away from a medical model of service delivery or even a Statement of SEN suddenly becomes a problem at transition. The language spoken changes across education, social services and health due to different service ideologies, and the complex nature of transition intensifies by the operation of categories to determine who is eligible for specific services. So the argument that develops here is that the various ‘modus operandi’ of services, based on the different conceptualisations of special needs and disability, is an impediment to desirable service continuity and inter-agency co-ordination at transition. Pupils at school action plus could be deemed most at risk.

It is perhaps, relevant, to consider parents’ relationships with services as a basis for explaining why the form and functions of services and multi-agency collaboration becomes important.

2.8 Parental relationships with external services

In terms of transition as a process, and particularly for pupils with SEN, the age boundaries of moving between child and adult services are unlikely to match their individual transition tempos. This can be a source of additional stress to parents and a period when support from external services is required.

However, parental accounts about external services can be critical. A study by McConkey and Smyth (2003), investigating parental perceptions of risks after their older teenagers with severe learning disabilities left two special schools in Northern Ireland, found that nearly 40% of parents complained about lack of help from health and social services. Smart's small scale study (2004) also found discontinuity between parents' objectives and those of agencies, with disagreements about funding of services. This presents a rather bleak outlook of parents and services working in partnership. Moreover, there is the implication that parents have to avoid or face risks alone. Parents of pupils with severe learning disabilities would like to see more respite provision, social and leisure opportunities and more contact from social workers (McConkey & Smyth, 2002, 2003). The importance of having a named social worker was also identified by Heslop and Abbott (2007).

Looking into possible differences between the way parents and professionals understand transition and the way in which they view the support they receive, was identified as an important aspect by Kaehne and Beyer (2011). These researchers think that this could account for some of the difficulties in matching institutional frameworks of support with parental expectations.

Townsley (2004) finds McConkey and Smyth's proposal of a shared-risk strategy within the framework of parental risk-taking to be a useful approach, whereby services can help families cope with the challenges of transition. This strategy involves families, professionals and the young person working together to identify and plan how to manage risks at transition. This framework can provide more discussion between parents and professionals and scope for joint-working on aspects that matter to parents and young people. Ultimately parents identify being

well-connected with key professionals and continuity of their support as contributing to positive transition pathways (Heslop & Abbott, 2007). However, contact with transition services that do not focus on planning goals related to career and employment opportunities, housing and social and leisure prospects are likely to increase parental stress (Sloper, et al., 2010).

The proposal of individualised budgets held by parents may start to address some of these issues. The involvement of services, their relationships with parents and the relationships amongst services themselves, therefore, become a fundamental interest to this study because they can shape the transition outcomes of pupils.

2.9 Participation and co-ordination of services: extending the debate

The participation and co-ordination of external services as a good practice indicator has been addressed largely by those researchers who found this organisation to be problematic (e.g. Heslop, et al., 2002; Kaehne & Beyer, 2009a; Ward, et al., 2003). Polat et al., (2001) provide evidence that questions whether the high level of service co-ordination needed survives the transition phase. It was also a major problem identified in the 'Valuing People' White Paper (Department of Health, 2001), and it was particularly related to the transfer from children to adult social care services. However, in their critique of social policy and its impact on professional practice within learning disability services, Malin and Race (2010) state, that the relatively small amount of space dedicated to children's services in the White Paper, had the potential to maintain the divide between child and adult learning disability services. The authors suggest that with the case of Baby Peter and even after the 'Every Child Matters' Green Paper, there has been a gap in professional input between children and adult services. This leads to the assumption that working with children with learning disabilities and their families is not as highly prioritised as involvement with child protection cases. Hudson (2006) in effect, talks about discontinuity at transition and argues that learning disability and transition are generally awarded low priority even in social services.

The setting up of the Learning Disability Partnership Boards within LAs and the development of the post of 'Director of Children's Services' was designed to promote the integration of the local authority and children's social services (Department for Education and Skills, 2003). Whether this policy development extended from strategic levels to front-line professional practice is possibly variable across geographical regions. Beresford (2004) states that the evidence suggests that legislation and policies do not guarantee change and progress in practice. The professional background and vision of the person taking on a director post, and his or her understanding of the various professional roles across education and social service could play a role in determining this, although often understated. However, whether the co-ordination of children's services has also had an impact on liaison work between child social services and adult social care when it comes to transition practice is another question. Hudson (2006) thinks not and argues that the integration of children's social services and education has served to widen the gap between children's and adults' services. He asserts that transition seems to lose out on leadership and organization because it falls in the gap between the two services.

Heslop et al., (2002) found that for more than 40% of families, transfer to adult social services had not been dealt with at all. In trying to improve practice and transform vision to reality, this burning issue was dealt with again in the 'Valuing People Now' (Department of Health, 2009) strategy, stressing the responsibility of the Directors of Children's Services to facilitate transition by linking with adult services and the responsibility of the Director of Adult Social Services to commission the provision of social care services for people with learning disabilities. The Green Paper's suggestion for LA to extend responsibility for young people with SEN till age 25 may facilitate some positive change in the future.

Publication of separate documents from health, education and social policy has not necessarily helped to promote multi-agency working. There have only been few documents that have been joint collaborations from these departments and these did not appear until 2007. The document 'A transition guide for all services' presents what it calls key information for professionals about the transition process for disabled children (Department for Children Schools and Families & Department

of Health, 2007) and is an example of one combined effort. Another is the 'Progression through Partnership' (Her Majesty's Government, 2007) joint strategy which talks about labour government's strategy for the departments of education, health and work and pensions to create services that work closer together to support opportunities for FE and training. This document was important in that it actually suggested that Connexions (or its successor body) and the local authority must ensure that pupils with SEN who do not have a Statement be included in the processes of transition planning as suggested by the SEN Code of Practice. It makes reference to all learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability, which is inclusive of various conditions including dyslexia, ASD, ADHD, sensory and cognitive disability and mental health problems, even if young people did not have identified learning difficulties or interventions at school (Her Majesty's Government, 2007, p. 9). The document highlights key concerns around the lack of expertise that exists around supporting pupils into higher education opportunities. It also recognises inadequate links between health, social care and education and supports the application of PCP and direct payments within social services.

2.10 Illuminating the difficulties at transition between services

The age at which the shift from child to adult services happens appears to be clearer in social care than in health. For those pupils who require social care, the handing over process should happen in time for the person to belong to adult social care at age 18. This handing over process is marked by a new assessment about a pupil's care needs, which becomes part of a care plan for the future. This often aims to link in with a health action plan devised by the health service.

The health service however is another piece in the complex jigsaw of service providers because the move from paediatric to adult health services is particularly vague. The continuing operation of health services, such as physiotherapy and speech and language therapy at the point of transfer from paediatric to adult health services is patchy, even if close collaborations had been formed amongst professionals within children's services. Until age 18 children's services are likely to

continue, but the discontinuity after age 18 is clearly outlined in the document 'Healthcare for All' (Michael, 2008), a report of an independent inquiry into access to healthcare for people with LD.

Research carried out with parents, young people as well as professionals, has identified the challenging nature of handing over pupil cases within both health and social services at transition, and also the discrepancy between what can be offered in adult services and what was offered within children services (Abbott & Heslop, 2009). Beresford (2004) asserts that adult services may not be adapted to meet the needs of young people. Hence there are both systemic barriers and difficulties related to service provision. These gaps were particularly highlighted for young adults with ASD and those with ADHD, but health services were also lacking for both children and adults with profound and complex LD (Michael, 2008).

An area of discontinuity in service co-ordination and gaps in provision has become more conspicuous in the transition between CAMHS and the adult mental health service (AMHS). Within a broader study on partnership work, Kaehne (2011) found a remarkable lack of engagement and exclusion of mental health professionals from transition planning, with poor integrated working between CAMHS and AMHS and between CAMHS and social care. Although this work is limited, in that it was based on a small sample of mental health professionals (n=8), and Kaehne recommends large-scale studies to aid further investigation, this study suggests that gaps in service delivery and co-ordination is rooted in differences in service ideology between child and adult mental health. This leads Kaehne (2011) to conclude that one solution to these problems could involve extending CAMHS responsibility to age 21. However, this would present a great financial and structural challenge to CAMHS, another public service that is currently facing cuts and staff shortage. Another possible way forward is for CAMHS and AMHS to address their differing service ideologies and to develop an internal infrastructure between the two services that outlines clear handing over processes and information sharing, with practitioners leading on developing and managing this. Criteria for accessing mental health services also needs to reflect the various needs of the SEN population, rather than being driven by structural aspects like staff shortage.

This discussion about service co-ordination is important not solely in determining who should be involved at transition but additionally to clarify who is ultimately responsible for leading on and bringing people together and for subsequent follow-up and implementation of transition goals. Polat et al., (2001) found that there was rarely one professional who had an overview of a young person's case and who took the lead in shaping the provision to meet their needs. Although, as suggested earlier, it was envisaged that Connexions could fulfil the latter role and facilitate joint working for pupils, studies already cited have shown that this was not the case. In a more recent study based on the issues faced by 15 young people with a wide range of LD leaving out-of-borough residential schools and colleges, Heslop and Abbott (2008) found considerable variation when it came to who led on co-ordinating transition planning. In the case of FE colleges, there was a noticeable lack of responsibility amongst services for on-going transition planning and monitoring. However, there were signs of some initiatives to help improve interagency working, such as the development of a common transition protocol across services and, in some LAs, the setting up of a multi-agency transition service.

These types of initiatives appear to have become more possible with the Aiming High Agenda for Disabled Children (Department for Education and Skills, 2007a), because transition became one of the five work streams within this agenda to raise the standards of transition support and provision. A 3 year programme called the Transition Support Programme (TSP) was launched in 2008 with £19m funding attached to improve services for all disabled young people with a statement of SEN and those with complex health needs from ages 14 to 19 and beyond. The TSP also aspired to make a positive impact on the transition of those young people who were at school action and school action plus. It aimed to ensure that all LAs had strategic arrangements in place and as a result, various LAs used the financial support and advice provided by the National Transition Support Team's regional advisors, who led the TSP, to develop multi-agency transition protocols and services for young people and their families, and to improve post-school outcomes for pupils with SEN.

Sloper et al.'s (2010) cross-sectional study, carried out in 2007-8, identified 34 multi-agency transition services for young people with disabilities, only 23 had all three statutory agencies of education, health and social care involved. The researchers state that despite some encouraging findings about the support provided from dedicated multi-agency transition services, there were significant levels of unmet needs, particularly related to difficulties in accessing appropriate FE college courses and lack of options related to housing, leisure activities, and employment. Having a transition worker who directly supported the young person and parents rather than transition workers who took on this role in addition to their normal professional role (non-designated transition workers) was identified as having a positive impact on meeting needs. But only 17 of the 23 services who had transition workers engaged in this role exclusively, with staff shortages and lack of resources rife. Moreover, this study indicates a need for clarity around the role of transition workers since this was also variable across LAs.

Since the Transition Support Programme came to a close fairly recently (March 2011), this study was unable to access reliable research work that could shed light on the impact this has had on the quality of transition planning for young people with SEN or on the nature of post-secondary outcomes. Yet, the appropriate organisation of a LA multi-agency protocol on transition planning and appointment of a lead professional was supported as good practice, if this incorporated quality partnership work with young people and their families. The TSP website presented various LA case studies that focussed on a theme in transition, such as multi-agency working, post-16 opportunities and employment (TSP, 2011). However, the extent to which these projects can continue to be sustained now that funding and support of the TSP has ceased to exist is questionable. It will also be important to ascertain whether LAs were able to develop their transition work and how identified gaps were addressed.

It is useful to differentiate transition protocols from transition passports when discussing transition practices across services as these have, at times, been interchangeable terms (e.g. Hellier, 2009). A protocol explains the roles that services, departments and schools have in supporting a young person to make a

successful transition and it outlines the way in which they may work together. On the other hand, a transition passport is a document that details a young person's strengths, individual achievements and needs. This document can help to prepare a pupil to leave school and should also include information on how best to support the young person, to promote consistency of information to post-school providers.

Returning to the subject of transition protocols, Kaehne and O'Connell (2010) have started to conduct a study across 22 LAs in Wales to ascertain whether they have protocols in place and how they may be promoting co-operation at a multi-agency level. Their paper presents a preliminary picture, indicating that although there is consensus about the benefits of joint work, the way the transition protocols were written fell short of addressing the inadequacies in transition planning which researchers have identified over these last years. Collaborative multi-agency working seems to be hampered by issues related to consent and data sharing, poor involvement of young people and carers as equal partners and interestingly, the failure to include non-statutory agencies, such as employment organisations and voluntary agencies in the process.

Kaehne's (2011) work on the transition of young people from CAMHS to AMHS, also identified the failure to include mental health professionals in multi-agency transition planning frameworks. Interestingly, other professionals notably prominent in multi-agency working, such as educational psychologists, seem to be relatively inconspicuous in multi-agency work specifically related to transition planning from secondary school. Conversely, in Scotland, the development of post-school psychological services has seen educational psychologists take a key role in transition work at various levels, including policy, service delivery and multi-agency working (Hellier, 2009; MacKay, 2009). A research report that reviewed the functions and the contributions of educational psychologists in England and Wales, by Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires & O'Connor (2006) highlighted the distinctive contribution of educational psychologists within multi-agency contexts, but involvement at particular educational transitions failed to be cited as one of these contexts. There were only three instances where the word 'transition' was cited in the document and this was linked to the possibility of educational

psychologists acting as lead professionals within multi-agency working in the Common Assessment Framework.

Within the context of limited service delivery and multi-agency transition working, it has also become apparent that some young people may be better served than others at transition. Sloper et al., (2010) found that multi-agency services participating in their study focussed on young people with severe LD. Other young people such as those with high functioning autism or those young people whose learning difficulties are not severe do not have access to these services. It is interesting to note the impact that specific organisations and pressure groups can have in trying to change this state of affairs and on promoting the prioritisation of a particular group of young people. Following the Autism Act 2009, the document “Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives” (Department of Health, 2010a) provided the strategy for including and supporting adults with autism within public services. It also recommended the appointment of a senior manager within each local area to commission services for adults with autism. The consequent document “Implementing Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives” (Department of Health, 2010b), specifically outlined how health and social care services can support young people with ASD more effectively, including improving transition support. This is certainly a positive development for young people with ASD, particularly those with high functioning autism or Asperger Syndrome. However, there are certain aspects to consider in translating this policy into practice – how will it be reflected in the quality frontline service delivery? Do services have adequate knowledge and training about ASD? And, will it yet again have the potential to impact negatively on the distribution and allocation of services across other groups of young people?

The on-going threat to public services and job cuts that are being implemented do little to improve the profile of multi-agency working in transition. These events, the prospect of increasing the school leaving age and the government’s intention to provide more opportunity for involvement of voluntary and private sectors will probably encourage further debate, and ultimately, a need to clarify roles and responsibilities within clear transition procedures.

If mainstream schools will have pupils for longer, the tracking process may mean that pupils have less chance of disappearing and more time to clarify the workings of a multi-agency transition service. Schools could be given more explicit responsibility for transition planning and transition outcomes and they could choose who can help them in the process. Hence this has the potential to yet again, change transition planning for pupils with SEN. However, most studies consulted have been based on young people attending special schools, who already have pupils attending up to the age of 19 and still there have been problems related to transition planning and outcomes. This will be discussed in further detail in the school section, but the role of Connexions requires some discussion here because Connexions were the external services designed to have a key task in transition planning, particularly in relation to joining up services and whose role could, simultaneously, reduce pupil attrition rates.

2.11 A focus on the Connexions service

The role of Connexions and its relationship with schools requires some more discussion here, although the latter aspect will also be considered further in the section discussing school systems.

The Connexions Service came into existence in April 2001. Through the role of the Personal Adviser (PA), the aim of the service is to help all young people aged 13 to 19 to make informed career choices and provide information and guidance on FE, training and employment. For people with LD, the service extends to age 25. The service works within formal educational settings as well as in the community (e.g. the Connexions one stop shops) and it was envisaged that along with schools the service would assist in overcoming poor transition planning (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Polat, et al., 2001).

It was stipulated that effectiveness would be achieved when PAs were to be part of a school-based team involving staff like the SENCo, head of year/house, school counsellor and learning mentor (Department for Education and Employment, 2001). However, there has been limited research evidence about the effectiveness

of Connexions in helping young people with SEN (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Cullen, Lindsay, & Dockrell, 2009). To enable positive outcomes, a key task for Connexions is to reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who were NEET. This was identified as a central target in a detailed research report carried out by Hoggarth and Smith (2004), which sought to understand the impact of Connexions on young people who were at risk of underachievement and disaffection. This included those with a range of SEN and those with emotional and behaviour problems. Although the sampling of this study was purposive, the qualitative methodology of realistic evaluation across seven regional Connexions Partnerships was able to pull out positive impact as well as difficulties.

A key issue drawn out by Hoggarth and Smith (2004) was the tension within Connexions itself, between those PA's who sought to provide a universal, generic service for all young people across the range of needs and those PA's who were aligned to provide a targeted, specialist service to young people who were deemed to be at risk of NEET. Another key problem identified was that of schools failing to identify pupils at risk, and consequently their engagement with Connexions was unlikely. Hence the achievement of a school-based team suggested by the guidance (Department for Education and Employment, 2001) as well as the nature and degree of involvement with pupils with various SEN is questionable. This outcome was also echoed by Cullen, Lindsay and Dockrell (2009), who found different patterns of PA deployment within two LAs. Cullen et al., (2009) carried out semi-structured interviews with 46 PA's and found that no distinction was made between Connexions services for young people with specific speech and language difficulties and those with SEN associated with general LD. There is the additional danger, therefore, that when Connexions do get involved, pupils with SEN may be regarded as a somewhat homogenous group of people.

When Connexions do work with pupils with SEN their involvement usually starts from Year 9 onwards for those pupils with a Statement of SEN. They are responsible for helping pupils to prepare for the future and to signpost young people and their parents to appropriate post-16 and post-19 opportunities from mainstream and special schools respectively. This involves drawing up what is known as Section

139a documentation at transition from school. This document includes educational information and details about the pupil's SEN that would have been compiled over time, along with support requirements post-school. Both studies mentioned above pointed to a lack of clarity around how pupils were channelled to either universal or intensive service provision by schools, and if they are channelled at all. Studies outlined earlier, such as that by Beyer and Kaehne (2008) identified a lack of support to help young people try out jobs while at school or college. This brings the role of school and liaison with Connexions an important aspect that needs to be dealt with further in this chapter when I discuss the school system.

Focussing on the Connexions service per se, however, two questions emerged from the earlier stages of this work; In the light of the tasks given to Connexions and particularly, the targeted role which is likely to involve specialist assessments and intervention, what background knowledge and training would a PA need? Secondly, who could provide appropriate supervision and management of PAs if they are possibly to fulfil the role of key person to monitor and implement transition plans?

Studies have been less able to extract the differentiation between having knowledge and training related to procedures and knowledge and training about various SEN. Examples of procedures include the graduated response for pupils with SEN, statutory assessment process and other types of provision (such as Additional Learning Support). Training in SEN includes information about learning disability, behaviour analysis, and the strengths and needs associated with particular conditions, such as ASD and Down syndrome.

Several researchers have indicated that most PAs had a generic careers service background. In their study about the development of the PA role in two special schools and an FE college, Grove and Giraud-Saunders (2003) identified PAs lack of experience in working with moderate and severe LD, particularly non-verbal pupils, but did not really examine and interpret this aspect in the discussion of their findings. Hoggarth and Smith (2004) did not achieve clear evidence about the role of specialist PAs and were indefinite about the quality of expert knowledge held by these PAs. There was limited reference to training requirements for working with

specific at-risk groups like SEN. On the other hand, Cullen et al., (2009) found that formal training of PAs in SEN was very limited, including specialist PAs. They specifically discussed the concerns about training on how to support young people with SEN and those with speech and language and communication difficulties. Ward et al., (2003) and Abbott and Heslop (2009) explicitly query the advisers expertise in LD shedding doubt on their ability to provide the pupil support needed. It is perhaps relevant to suggest that inadequate training can play a role in the variability of practice amongst advisors, a feature that would probably apply to other services as well.

The second question is, by no means, simpler to answer. Line management and its quality is a bone of contention for Connexions PAs (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003), with supervision and support often found to be weak or even unnecessary (Hoggarth & Smith, 2004). Maybe this could be related to why there is lack of evidence about Connexions' effectiveness (Cullen, et al., 2009), since appropriate supervision and management could help to oversee aspects of the PA role such as establishing individual pupil needs, facilitating the development of pupil aspirations and wider tasks, such as establishing constructive links with colleges and employment agencies.

Since April 2008, funding for Connexions passed from Connexions Partnerships to Local Authorities. This relatively new responsibility of Local Authorities was presented in the Education and Skills Act 2008 (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2008) and is discussed further in this chapter (p. 83). However, considering the conundrum surrounding the role of LAs at the time of writing, the uncertain future of Connexions and the unknown shape and form of careers support for pupils with SEN, it is, by all means, a discussion "to be continued". There is the question about what would happen if Connexions is axed as a national agency and this study may shed some more light on this discussion.

2.12 The school system

2.12.1 Factors relating to transition planning and transition outcomes: mainstream and special schools

This chapter has made ongoing reference to how schools can have a role in planning and determining future outcomes for pupils, although various concerns have tended to prevail. RQ1 is also particularly concerned with the reality of transition planning in schools. According to Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin and Johnson (2009), the field of transition faces a puzzling predicament, because schools continue to fall short of providing young people with SEN opportunities to finish school, pursue FE, experience social inclusion and meaningful employment. In a large-scale longitudinal research that covered both mainstream and special sector, Polat et al., (2001) found that about a quarter of parents thought that school had poorly prepared their children for transition, whilst half thought that transition preparation was good. Satisfaction was stronger amongst those parents of pupils who attended special schools than mainstream schools. Polat et al., (2001) state that research on disabled young peoples' transitions to adulthood has been more concerned with aspects related to the transitions to health and social services rather than focussing on the extent to which the young people were well served by the school and careers service. Dewson, Aston, Bates, Ritchie and Dyson (2004), question the ability of mainstream systems to meet the transition planning needs of pupils with less well-defined learning and behaviour difficulties. These are pupils usually on School Action or Action Plus of the SEN register.

With student performance in schools primarily determined in terms of academic achievement, it is no surprise that transition planning for some pupils with SEN could risk receiving little or no attention, particularly for those pupils with low attainments. This has implications on the inclusive practices of secondary schools and on the future transition pathways of pupils. Carter, Trainor, Cakiroglu, Swedeen and Owens (2010) argue that literature on secondary inclusion suggests that a combination of obstacles may come together in ways that limit consideration of a range of career development experiences for young people with SEN. Accessibility of programmes and curricula, flexibility in timetabling, making school resources

available and, ultimately, attitudes of teachers towards inclusion are factors that will play a role in this.

Sociological literature provides an outlook about school experience that is characterised by unequal educational transitions. Pallas (2004) states that transition pathways shed light on structures or features of a social system that impact on the nature of individual experiences. Examples of features within schools for instance include, selectivity (such as that based on religion, race and achievement) and specificity (such as academic specificity and vocational specificity). This can mean that teachers' attitudes are characterised by lower expectations within these classes and may, as already suggested, generate low aspirations for pupils. From this standpoint, the labelling of a pupil as having SEN and the placement of pupils in special schools can by their very nature have an impact on post-school destinations. Mitchell (1999) views these destinations as largely determined by the type of school attended, with college link courses typically characterised by limited interaction with other mainstream pupils for those within special schools. Similarly, other British and Scottish studies have shown poor outcomes in terms of employment opportunities for young people who attended special schools, even if they were identified as having mild to moderate LD (Freshwater & Leyden, 1989; May & Hughes, 1985).

The impact of school experiences on future prospects for young people in England is perhaps reflected in a high proportion of NEET 18 year olds experiencing suspension or exclusion from school by Year 11 (Department for Education, 2010c). This does not necessarily imply a causal relationship between exclusions and NEET, but the exclusion of pupils has been identified as a practice that can impact negatively on transition outcomes. If a pupil is excluded from school, one can assume that the school is unlikely to focus on the pupil's transition planning. A young person excluded from school could also challenge other social systems and therefore be harder to employ.

Exclusions can be a feature of any school. In a longitudinal study based on a large sample of pupils with mild LD who experienced transition from three special

schools, Caton and Kagan (2006) identify the problems of exclusion and non-attendance as the main challenges to a successful transition experience and was linked to attrition in the study. Although the study tends to concentrate on this issue, it was also interesting to reflect on the fact that about one third of young people who aspired to go to college actually made it to college after school. There were school leavers who could not be traced, which also questions the role of the school in keeping track of post-school destinations and having some degree of accountability of outcomes. When discussing ways of counteracting the attrition, Caton and Kagan (2006) offer a very limited discussion of school exclusion and there is no indication of how exclusion could be reduced and why exclusions happened. Although the young people were described as a heterogeneous group in terms of their ability, there is no elaboration about their SEN. Nevertheless, this study showed that non-attendance and exclusion from special schools can present missed opportunities for creating better transitions

Burchardt's (2004) paper about the educational and occupational aspirations of young disabled people is directly relevant to the transition from school to adult life. It suggests that besides individual characteristics and parental background, contextual factors at school had an important role to play in shaping pupil's aspirations. She consequently gave three recommendations to the provision of support in schools: encouraging positive aspirations from an early age irrespective of their impairment, compensating for any non-school disadvantages that could have impact on pupil aspirations (e.g. low parental education) and supporting the achievement of qualifications. It is relevant to mention that Connexions did not yet feature at the time of Burchardt's study and furthermore, she did not analyse school systems per se. The definition of disability used was also very general and determined by some degree of subjective evaluation.

In Yates et al.'s (2011) research focus on transition pathways and NEET status, the researchers predominantly take a sociological view and link structural inequalities to unequal transition experiences, but their discussion is limited in terms of offering suggestions about potential changes in those structures which young persons' operate within, such as changing the way pupils are set in classes according to

academic achievement. However, I find the notion of ‘individualised transitions’ (Yates, et al., 2011) and similarly that of individual ‘agency’ (Heinz, 2009), to be of particular interest. These terms refer to the trend whereby young people are increasingly expected to take responsibility to sift through and negotiate the various options available to them. This requirement is epitomised by the individual’s ability to be flexible in their plans within the context of changing circumstances in the labour market. Hence, Yates et al. (2011) argue that young people who are less prepared or able to engage in education or training, or to make appropriate decisions related to post-16 options are more likely to experience poor transition pathways. From this perspective, some pupils with SEN may be seen to be at a disadvantage. However, taking a psycho-educational perspective, this notion is interesting because it implies that schools can have a major role in the task of increasing pupil’s personal competency and social adaptive functioning. In relation to pupils with SEN this needs to take on broader meaning, possibly captured within what is usually referred to as adaptive behaviour skills as well as what American literature refers to as, the teaching of self-determination skills.

2.12.2 Skills schools need to teach within transition planning

Adaptive behaviour and self-determination are two areas that embrace a wide range of skills and their definitions are useful here. Adaptive behaviour includes behaviours that enable a person to live independently and to deal with the demands of daily life. It is composed of a number of coping skills that facilitate community integration (Nihira, Leland, & Lambert, 1993). Self-determined behaviour encompasses four characteristics of autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment and self-realisation (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998). Adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills form the functional life skills curriculum that has been associated with positive transition outcomes (Alwell & Cobb, 2006, 2009; Kohler & Field, 2003; Madaus, Gerber, & Price, 2008; Wehmeyer, et al., 1998) and self-determination skills can be effectively enhanced by targeting multi-component instructional interventions to them (Cobb, Lehmann, Newman-Gonchar, & Alwell, 2009). An American-based study involving the systematic review of secondary transition correlational literature, identified self-

determination and social skills as in-school predictors of both post-school education and employment (Test et al., 2009). Self-determination in particular, has become an increasingly important skill in the transition to post-secondary settings.

Table 2.1 outlines main component domains of adaptive and self-determined behaviour:

Adaptive Behaviour	Self-determined Behaviour
<p>Communication skills e.g. language development and non-verbal skills</p> <p>Personal independence e.g. self-help skills</p> <p>Domestic activities e.g. cooking</p> <p>Community living skills e.g. money handling, health and safety</p> <p>Vocational activity e.g. job related skills</p> <p>Social skills e.g. co-operation, conflict resolution</p> <p>Economic activity e.g. numbers and time concepts</p>	<p>Choice-making skills</p> <p>Decision-making skills</p> <p>Problem-solving skills</p> <p>Self-awareness</p> <p>Goal setting and attainment</p> <p>Self-instruction skills</p> <p>Independent living, risk taking and safety skills</p> <p>Self-advocacy, leadership and team skills</p>

Table 2-1: Component domains of adaptive and self-determined behaviour

The inter-relatedness of the two areas is clear. For example, self-advocacy, leadership and team skills relate to communication skills and the learning of specific social skills that are involved in group participation. Community living skills and the use of community resources will involve behaviour such as choice making, problem solving, goal setting and attainment. Vocational activity includes skills that relate to

successful job performance and will similarly engage goal setting, attainment and self-instruction skills.

It is acknowledged that these skills, particularly the ability to engage in self-advocacy could take many years to develop (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). The question of whether and how adaptive behaviour and self-determined behaviour necessary for adult life are being addressed in schools therefore becomes important within the context of transition planning, albeit not an explicit declaration in visionary government documents. Sherron Targett and Wehman (2011) add aspects such as understanding one's SEN or disability and staying on-task as self-determination skills relevant to transition planning. This relevance has also been demonstrated by various studies; for example, poor concentration or off-task behaviour, communication skills and motivation were identified to be common obstacles to achieving employment (McConkey & Mezza, 2001).

Within the context of transition planning, the objective assessment and teaching of self-determination and adaptive behaviour skills becomes more meaningful in terms of pupil involvement, since enhancing these skills provides opportunity for pupils to advocate for themselves and become more active in their transition planning, including attendance at transition reviews. It also implies that incorporating the learning of these skills in a pupil's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is a positive way forward. However, a study carried out by Powers et al., (2005) in two large urban school districts in Western America, showed less than 7% of IEPs recording any type of goals related to self-determination skills.

The concept of skills development may also contribute added value and purpose to the 'shared risk model' of working suggested by McConkey and Smyth (2003), which was considered earlier, and which discussed the need for closer partnership between parents, professionals and school staff. This model suggested these partners work together to identify and manage risks. The framework can be further developed to help parents, pupils and school staff members to look at which adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills pupils need support to develop, to help reduce risks and improve post-16 outcomes. This also raises the significance of

appropriate skill assessment throughout secondary school, which can then inform educational goals.

Some researchers have raised questions about whether schools are managing to meet the challenge of a co-ordinated education that includes a consideration of these skills due to the variability of transition practices (R. B. Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Halpern, 1994; Kohler & Field, 2003). This question gains more significance when one reflects on the finding by Beyer and Kaehne (2008) in the UK, that pupils with LD in special schools had the lowest levels of adaptive behaviour and were the least likely to be employed, whereas some of the pupils in mainstream who had higher levels of adaptive behaviour were able to find employment. This supports the assessment and development of adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills within a wider curriculum perspective for pupils within special schools. The study by Beyer and Kaehne (2008) indicates that mainstream schools, special schools and FE differ in the provision of work awareness. The pupils in special school and FE received work awareness, which was linked to improved likelihood of employment. In contrast, those in mainstream did not get any work awareness and were still more likely to obtain employment. However, the needs of these pupils were already described as mild. Hence, this is not a controlled study because the participants in the three settings were not matched. On a positive note, however, Beyer and Kaehne's study can be described as more of a naturalistic study.

Adherence to the National Curriculum may be seen to interfere with this, although more flexibility has been introduced at Key Stage 4 in recent years. A number of alternative curriculum programmes have been offered in recognition that the formal curriculum was not relevant and appropriate for all pupils. Researchers have also argued that although proposals about changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum talk about inclusivity, they raise questions about consideration of the needs of pupils with PMLD. Lawson, Waite and Robertson (2005) discuss various tensions and challenges around the development of curriculum for these pupils. They mention that although a functional skills-based curriculum emerges as a distinctive feature of Key Stage 4, the nature of what relates to these skill areas is vague with unclear distinctions between practical life skills (e.g. cooking) and the personal and

social skills required for self-determination (e.g. advocacy). Kohler and Field (2003) argue that within the context of mainstream schools effective 'transition-focused education' is not always achieved because the academic curriculum does not allow the flexibility for an individual needs-based approach. This has several implications on the inclusivity, transition planning and career development needs of some pupils, as already expressed by Carter et al., (2010) and clearly it is an aspect that requires investigation, considering that more pupils with SEN are attending mainstream education.

2.12.3 Developing opportunities for work experience

The significance of work experience and vocational awareness for pupils with SEN within transition planning was first identified by researchers who explored employment prospects, including supported employment. Amongst earlier work, that by Hasazi et al., (1989) is frequently cited in more recent studies concerned with transition outcomes. Hasazi et al., (1989) sought to compare the employment status of young people with and without intellectual disabilities based on a longitudinal study in one US district, and to identify key aspects associated with differential employment outcomes. The young people in the heterogeneous sample of pupils with SEN and intellectual disabilities had received some form of special education. Hasazi and her colleagues found that young people with intellectual disabilities experienced higher unemployment rates and when employed, had unskilled jobs and lower wages. Of major relevance however, was finding that vocational class experience or work experience whilst at school was positively associated to employment for young people with intellectual disabilities and not for those without. This initiated the focus on career development opportunities for pupils with SEN.

A UK study carried out by Hornby and Kidd (2001) also reflected on reported high levels of unemployment. This study involved a very specific cohort; it was based on a small sample of 24 students (12 males and 12 females) with moderate and severe LD who had a Statement of SEN, who, after spending an average of seven years in

special schools were included in mainstream schools for an average of three years at secondary level. Despite the main limitation of a small sample size, this study deserves mention because it aimed to investigate the quality of life of these young people three to nine years out of the school system from various perspectives – employment, post-school education, independence and social life. Using qualitative methods the authors found that only 4 people were working and another 5 had held jobs for some time period since leaving school. The young people in Hornby and Kidd's (2001) sample were also experiencing a poor quality of social life marked by limited independence.

Shifting the lens specifically on work experience, Hornby and Kidd (2001) emphasised that this was the main practice that was related to employment success. Moreover, 6 of the 9 young people who held a job had work experience and attended mainstream classes, whereas those pupils who moved into the special unit within the mainstream school did not get work experience. Although work experience is linked to employment probability, there is less emphasis on how extent of LD could have influenced future opportunities, including employment. Lack of work experience for people who did not attend mainstream settings was considered to be the only significant variable. This study does suggest, however, that although schools may be responding to the demand for vocational training and work experience, not all pupils with SEN within mainstream schools may get opportunities for work experience and therefore highlights the importance of exploring this within mainstream settings, since it could have an impact on transition outcomes.

The critical role of work experience in secondary school to positive post-school outcomes has consistently emerged in more recent studies (e.g. Test, et al., 2009), and I have also highlighted this in the first section of this literature review. To recapitulate, good practice indicators at the secondary level that have been associated with positive transition outcomes are the involvement of external employment agencies that provide supported work experience, and organised work awareness training within schools (Beyer & Kaehne, 2008). This could be delivered within the umbrella term vocational preparation. It is interesting to note however,

that researchers have often questioned what counts as vocational preparation within schools (e.g. Thomson & Ward, 1993), and Wehman (2002) suggested a need for evidence-based practice of transition-related activities that are relevant to vocational competence and career preparation, particularly at the level of post-secondary education. Whether vocational preparation would include attention to enhancing pupil motivation and other competencies within the self-determination literature, is potentially debatable.

The literature also suggests differences between mainstream and special schools. The research by Beyer and Kaehne (2008) indicated that vocational preparation was achieved via qualification courses in the mainstream sector. Although a much lower percentage of pupils were enrolled on vocational qualifications courses in special schools, the latter were better at providing vocational profiling and general work awareness courses which, on the other hand, were conspicuously absent in mainstream schools. This suggests appreciable variability that has been acknowledged by various researchers. Mitchell (1999) for instance, suggests inequalities in the expanded opportunity structure, where work experience was not available to everyone, particularly those pupils with more severe SEN or those in special schools. The availability of work experience may therefore be related to the assumptions school staff make about the pupil and their post-secondary options. However, the role schools and careers advisors have in promoting work experience during and after secondary school also has a part to play. Whether pupils with SEN have opportunities for work experience and vocational preparation is an area for investigation within the research questions of this study.

This discussion therefore draws in three important aspects. First, schools are well placed to teach adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills. Second, High Schools need to give more attention to the career development needs of pupils with SEN and should provide support for pupils to participate meaningfully in their school's career development events. Thirdly, the development of novel and effective partnerships between schools and employers within the community emerges as a central aspect of effective transition services, and schools may need to think of ways in which to establish these partnerships (Carter et al., 2009; Goupil,

et al., 2002). These aspects may take on increased significance in view of Connexions' potential absence in the future. There may also be a shift in accountability since, as expressed by Rusch et al., (2009) schools are not being held accountable for their effectiveness in providing an education that results in pupils with SEN experiencing positive post-secondary outcomes, including employment. The researchers also suggest that schools should be made responsible for organising and co-ordinating the support that pupils would need to adjust to the post-secondary transition.

Overall, it appears that although transition outcomes for young people with SEN continues to be an area marred with problems, the inclusion of pupils in mainstream classes is an aspect that suggests positive outcomes, but not in isolation. Educational components that are linked to higher quality outcomes for pupils with SEN are work experience, which even if provided by external organisations needs to involve the school as well. The literature suggests that the latter include academic skills, vocational preparation, work and occupational awareness, self-determination and adaptive behaviour skills, which should all be systematically linked within school, be it mainstream or special.

2.12.4 The development of a Transition Plan within Transition Planning

A transition plan is an individualised plan that explores a pupil's post-secondary options in terms of education, employment and independent living. It should develop goals and identify specific support and accommodations that the pupil will require to meet these goals. The plan should include the pupil's wishes and interests and needs to focus on skills that will prepare him or her for the real world (Korpi, 2008).

The SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a) and SEN Toolkit Section 10 (Department for Education and Skills, 2001b, p. 6) states that the head teacher is responsible to ensure a transition plan is written for students who have a Statement of SEN at Year 9, and this usually takes place within an annual review or a transition review meeting. Some researchers have confused the levels

of intervention that exist within mainstream schools. For example, in their interesting article about carer perspectives on the transition of young people with LD to employment, Kaehne & Beyer (2008) talk of the Statement of SEN as describing whether a pupil is on School Action or School Action Plus and they do not differentiate these levels of support. They also implied that the school system is responsible to initiate a transition plan for every pupil at age 14. This generalisation may not be reflective of the current graduated response that schools implement for pupils with SEN at secondary level.

A pupil is put on School Action Plus of the school's special needs register if school based approaches at School Action are not making the desired impact on pupil progress, and the school seeks advice from external professionals available. A Statement of SEN would be given to a pupil if they would not have made progress with interventions devised at School Action Plus over time, and the pupil requires more support than the school can provide. However the meaning and content of School Action Plus support is variable across mainstream schools. In terms of the development of transition planning from Year 9 specifically, there is currently no strict legal requirement for *all* pupils with SEN to have transition plans, although it is, in effect, good practice as supported by the SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a) and the SEN Toolkit (Department for Education and Skills, 2001b) and has been identified as a key factor related to better outcomes for young people and their parents (Sloper, et al., 2010).

Research however indicates a very patchy picture in terms of transition plans. Polat et al., (2001) found that although a third of parents stated that their children had a transition plan, 10% of pupils with Statements had not had an annual review that included a transition plan. This research was carried out prior to the Code of Practice of 2001. At the second wave of this longitudinal research, Dewson, Aston, Bates, Ritchie and Dyson (2004), found that young people with behavioural, emotional or social development needs were the least likely to recall having a transition planning review. Dewson et al., (2004) argue that these pupils with less well-defined impairments are likely to have attended mainstream schools and not have Statements.

From a large scale study involving 283 UK families, Heslop et al., (2002) found that a fifth of young people with learning disabilities had left school without a plan. In later studies, interviews with parents revealed that they were not even aware of the existence of a transition plan and professionals maintained that transition planning was rather inconsistent (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Heslop & Abbott, 2008). Following research work carried out with 12 pupils with SEN within two LAs, Dee (2006) found that at Year 9, schools only look at the immediate future; they review the pupil's Statement of SEN but pay little attention to long term transition planning, particularly if the pupil will remain at school until they are 19. Hence in special schools transition issues tend to be considered in the penultimate or final year reviews (Dee, 2006).

The content of transition plans is also a bone of contention. A significant aspect noted by Ward et al., (2003) is the failure to put a transition plan in writing and inconsistency around the topics that transition plans address. Transition plans have been linked to pupil Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). An American study carried out by Powers et al., (2005) on transition goals within IEPs indicated minimal detail of actions, with very little information about the support necessary for the pupil to achieve a goal. Flannery et al.'s (2008) American-based study, which identified the positive impact of post-secondary short-term skills training programmes, had similar recommendations for what they called "IEP teams". The researchers discourage the mere recognition of a post-16 destination such as a traditional college course. They suggest the identification of a post-school goal with the pupil, along with the activities needed to achieve the goal. However, school staff may lack knowledge about appropriate transition planning practices and may view the transition plan and goals within this as additional paperwork rather than a pupil's post-16 plan (Thompson, Fulk, & Piercy, 2000). Limited transition competencies of teachers, particularly those in special education, have implications for aspects such as transition training and the ability to prepare for and deliver transition services (Benitez, Morningstar, & Frey, 2009). These aspects emerge as a key concern in studies that focussed on effective transition practices for young people with SEN.

Powers, Greenen and Powers (2009) affirm that the transition plan should reflect a “synergistic collaboration” between the young person, parents, teachers, support staff and service providers, characterised by identification of the steps necessary to fulfil positive post-secondary outcomes. This supports the principles of PCP (see Chapter 3). According to Janiga and Costenbader (2002), every transition plan for pupils with LD should include reference to career counselling, social skills training and development of self-advocacy skills, particularly for those looking into post-secondary education. Schools also need to incorporate work-related skills that are regarded important by potential employers as goals within the transition plan (Goupil, et al., 2002).

The transition plan itself then should trigger the development of partnerships between school and other agencies or services, and starts that vital collaborative process at all levels. However, it has already been noted that often transition planning starts to be discussed too late on in secondary school, or that little time is dedicated to discuss it beyond annual review meetings (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; R. B. Cobb & Alwell, 2009). So regardless of the Code of Practice, evidence shows that there are pupils with SEN who leave school without any transition planning (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Beresford, 2004; Heslop, et al., 2002; Ward, et al., 2003)

In summarising this school section up to now, the point to make is that if, as the literature indicates, the development of individual agency and self-determination skills is an important task at transition, the questions that beckon are:

- Do schools recognise this?
- If they do, what are schools doing to help pupils develop these skills?
- Do schools provide pupils with SEN any work experience?
- What are schools doing in terms of developing a transition plan?
- Are they following the SEN Code of Practice for pupils with a Statement of SEN?
- What do schools include in the content of transition plans?
- Who do they involve in transition planning?

These questions can reflect the school's role in facilitating or restricting a pupil's transition as well as opportunities within post-secondary destinations. Within the developing concept of the transition process map, the school system is important from two perspectives; the curriculum and the organisational processes. The latter being those that are developed both within the school as well as with other community or external services.

2.12.5 The relationship between schools and external services

The nature of the relationship between schools and external services within the community will have an impact on the support given to pupils. Considering the specific transition-related role carried out by Connexions, it is significant to consider how the relationship between schools and careers services can relate to the quality of transition planning for pupils. Schools' liaison with Connexions for pupils at risk was variable depending on the working arrangements between the school and local Connexions Service (Hoggarth & Smith 2004). The researchers found three interesting models with changing roles and functions of Connexions, as a result of the different working practices:

1. Model 1 – Connexions as an “integrated agency” characterised by access to information that enabled the autonomy to identify young people at risk who may benefit from the service.
2. Model 2 – Connexions as a “neutral agency”, where schools are more in control of which pupils are referred to Connexions. Within this model Connexions have some access to pupils' information.
3. Model 3 – Connexions as an “outside agency”. This is characterised by the virtual isolation of the Connexions advisor where access to pupil information is highly controlled.

These models could possibly apply to other services, particularly in the changing scenario within professions like educational psychology. In this specific study, none of these models were associated with specific at risk groups or school types by Hoggarth and Smith (2004), although they did find evidence of more joint working between Connexions and special schools. This was characterised by more equality

between agencies and sharing of information. The more explicit statutory role for Connexions outlined for pupils with a Statement of SEN according to the SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a), and maybe because there is more educational continuity within special schools which cater for pupils beyond Year 11, may account for this finding. Grove and Giraud-Saunders (2003) found Connexions to be more of an integrated service within a special school for severe LD, where the PA developed the co-ordination role with families and other agencies and still maintained an independent position from school.

However, there are other studies specifically focussed on post-16 transition which show that Connexions support is patchy within the special sector. Carroll and Dockrell (2010) for example, found that just under half of their participants had met a Connexions PA in the previous year of leaving a residential special school.

Nevertheless, there appears to be variability across the Connexions service. Hoggarth and Smith (2004) commented on an inconsistent and vague relationship between risk and support in mainstream schools, with high risk pupils not necessarily receiving intensive support, a finding also mirrored by Cullen et al., (2009).

Resource allocation from external agencies like Connexions seems to be dependent on the way they are perceived by the school and by the consequent power relationship and partnership between school and service. Unequal power relationship can be demonstrated by schools withholding information about their pupils, their involvement with other agencies and the curriculum (Cullen, et al., 2009; Hoggarth & Smith, 2004). This is a vital point because it is likely also to apply to other services. If a service has a role in helping schools with transition planning for pupils with SEN, then the extent to which the service is permitted to help could be an important factor. In the case of Connexions, according to information achieved by researchers, it is the Statement of SEN that meant a clear obligation to involve them. It was interesting to note, from qualitative information given in Hoggarth and Smith's (2004) report, that pupils with no Statement may end up not engaging with Connexions.

Similarly, Cullen et al., (2009) found that although statutory obligations were being met for those pupils with a Statement, the level of support given by Connexions varied according to structural and resource issues within Connexions, specialist knowledge of staff and the different referral systems set up with schools. This meant that Section 139a assessment completion was also a variable practice for mainstream pupils with SEN. This is an important aspect considering that statistics indicate there were 2.7% pupils with Statements and yet another 18.2% with SEN but no Statement in January 2010 (Department for Education, 2010a), with there being an ongoing drive to provide early support and less reliance on Statements.

It remains unclear whether schools would prioritise pupils according to need or according to statutory commitments. The three models outlined by Hoggarth and Smith (2004) and the other studies mentioned present a patchy picture of support, with Connexions Advisors possibly “at the mercy” of the school. It would be reasonable to assume that there are pupils whose transition needs are not being met if schools do not have appropriate systems of support in-house and do not prioritise pupils for involvement with Connexions, or even other services, particularly pupils on School Action Plus who may benefit from the service. In mainstream schools, there can be a tension between the schools own career advisors and the Connexions personal advisors and potential ambiguity of roles too. This tension is perhaps lessened by those Connexions PAs who have embraced more targeted versus universal roles, that is, if school careers advisors embrace a more universal than targeted role. Nevertheless, service delivery can be impaired if roles and responsibilities are ambiguous.

So if the attitude and degree of responsiveness of the school is seen to be a key variable that will impact on the delivery of services to those most at risk, then, as suggested earlier, a school’s inclusive ethos and the development of systems that promote inclusive practice will be important determining factors of transition planning. Hoggarth and Smith (2004) referred to the influence of the management structure, systems and procedures that make up the school culture. Seen from this perspective, the values and status of staff with responsibility for SEN within the school structure, and the involvement of schools’ careers advisors, will have a

major impact on the kind of systems and protocols that can be created to support transition.

The literature clearly indicates that there are implications regarding how decisions about resource allocation are taken and how this impacts on the quality of transition planning for pupils with SEN. The role of Connexions and specifically, the way in which schools network with Connexions and other external services is, without doubt, an important aspect to investigate. The nature of the roles of external services as perceived by school staff has important implications on the way in which schools perceive their own role in terms of transition planning for pupils with SEN, and there could be differences between mainstream and special schools. Based on Hoggarth and Smith's (2004) finding that special schools felt that Connexions had a key role to play in transition planning, also warrants questions about the role the special school perceives for itself with regards to areas like career development and self-determination skills for pupils with SEN, irrespective of the existence of external services.

Finally, in view of the wider participation agenda in FE and the impending demise of Connexions, the ways in which schools form partnerships with college service providers will also gain importance. Interestingly, chapter 4 of the Green Paper (Department for Education, 2011) mentions that a new Education Bill is going to give school governing bodies responsibility for securing access to independent, impartial careers guidance for pupils, including those with SEN. This will clearly have implications on the future of careers services. Some political debate is indispensable within this study of transition; there is no mention of Connexions within the Green Paper, despite its central role in the last decade. The new Education Bill accessible from the Parliament website emphasises the impartial quality of careers guidance and that this quality cannot be provided by someone employed by the school. How this impartiality is to be guaranteed and who will be responsible for tracking pupil destinations are still to be determined.

2.13 Assessment work at transition: some thoughts for educational psychology practice

The research work reviewed has provoked reflection about the quality of professional assessments and at times even their existence. Mitchell (1999) talks about these assessments giving taken-for-granted ideas about pupil appropriateness or inappropriateness that could influence inclusion in work placements. Transition outcomes have also been negatively affected by professionals telling parents that their children have poor employment prospects (Hornby & Kidd, 2001). Mere judgements and assumptions about young peoples' abilities and motivations have also been commonly expressed without the engagement of professional assessments (Rose, et al., 2005). Hence the need for appropriate multi-agency assessments that can be linked to functional objectives, have the potential to contribute to transition planning. Improving the quality of assessments also requires the inclusion of information about specific accommodation to guide services at post-secondary level (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

In March 2008 the abolishment of the Learning and Skills Council responsible for funding FE was announced, and by April 2010 funding responsibilities shifted to the LA. The latter now has an obligation to arrange for an assessment of educational need and to advise about the learning provision that will be required by pupils with a Statement of SEN who are looking into pursuing FE or training (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009a; Department of Health, 2010b). This is similar to the statutory work that educational psychologists are familiar with and currently takes the form of the Section 139a compiled by Connexions. However, the most recent guidance on learning difficulty assessments mentions that reference to Connexions "should be read as applying to whoever is responsible for carrying out assessments on behalf of the local authority in a given area" (Department for Education, 2010b, p. 2). Further along through this guidance, educational psychologists are amongst the list of people who might be required to contribute to this assessment process.

A closer look at the quality of pupil assessments may be warranted. If the development of self-determination and adaptive behaviour skills are linked to positive transition outcomes, the inclusion of an adaptive behaviour skills assessment is advocated. The assessment framework therefore requires a constructive outlook, contributing useful information related to the development of pupil skill building and relevant goals within educational settings. Assessments could also link to possible work experience opportunities for pupils. If this kind of work is limited in the field of transition planning then it could have implications for educational psychology involvement at secondary level and beyond. Further evidence that confirms or refutes this would be an interesting aspect to explore from the point of professional involvement at transition.

There has certainly been an effort to try to bring together the various assessments that services can carry out to contribute to transition planning. One of the final Learning and Skills Council publications, the Learning for Living and Work framework guidance (Learning and Skills Council, 2009a), indicates this effort. The framework incorporates four sections devised to collate information about the support needs of a pupil with a learning difficulty or disability in FE so that decisions can be taken about additional funding requirements. It is positive to note that the framework can be used as a transition plan, and it makes reference to pupil aspirations relating to employment and focuses on achieving information relevant to aspects of adaptive behaviour skills. However, there is lack of clarity in identifying precisely who will co-ordinate the information gathering process. The guidance notes state that since section 1 and 2 of the Learning for Living and Work framework (2009) includes the assessment required under section 139a of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the Connexions PA is suggested as the likely person who could take on the co-ordinating role, although others could also be identified as lead professional if the existence of Connexions is threatened. This could possibly work similar to the way in which the lead professional was appointed within the Common Assessment Framework. On the other hand, the SENCo is also seen as the person who leads on transition planning, besides contributing to the Learning Difficulty Assessment (Department for Education, 2010b). The lack of explicit clarity

around roles, and particularly, who takes the lead role, can have the potential to create an abdication of responsibility. Work is therefore required on the quality assurance of assessments and at the systemic operational level of transition planning. This could be a potential contribution of educational psychologists.

The added value of the work of educational psychologists lies in their training as applied or community psychologists (Farrell, et al., 2006; MacKay, 2006a) and their skill in influencing colleagues within school and other professionals in education, health and social services at operational and strategic levels. This literature review has presented scope for developing work that focuses on pupil voice, motivations, and aspirations, within an assessment framework that provides constructive information about skills that schools need to be teaching in preparation for transition. But further to this, strategic work within LAs, particularly with directors of inclusion and SEN, and with what currently still is the 14 to 19 sector, is also to be considered as an area for development for educational psychology. This can be effective in improving the co-ordination of services at transition from secondary school. It also has the potential of extending educational psychology involvement in post-secondary sectors, a development that has become well established in Scotland (Hellier, 2009; MacKay, 2009). MacKay (2006b) carried out an evaluation of post-school psychological services across 12 Scottish LAs and found the services of educational psychologists to be particularly valuable in promoting positive outcomes for young people, developing service delivery models that helped the transition process post-school.

There has been minimal effort to explore the development of the role of educational psychologists within secondary to post-secondary transition work in England, despite several discussion papers about the future of the profession (Bason, 2009). It was interesting to note that American literature made more reference to the concept of transition assessment within education and the role of the school psychologist (e.g. Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; K. Powers, et al., 2009; Thoma, Held, & Saddler, 2002). If the research work presented here may generate further implications for extending educational psychology practice, then this work will be of added value because it could offer an opportunity to contribute to the

dearth of literature on the role of the educational psychologist in transition from secondary school and beyond. This will acquire further meaning in view of the extension of the school leaving age and with talk of service delivery from birth to 25 years. The educational psychology profession is likely to loosen their current age boundaries as they work with child, adolescent and adult.

2.14 Conclusion

The literature indicates that the transition from secondary school for pupils with SEN can be a markedly variable experience, characterised by greater challenges when compared to the experience of other pupils without SEN. This chapter has considered aspects related to school, pupil, family and external services that are also relevant to the research questions of this study. Research question 1 is concerned with identifying components of transition planning within the real world, with the school being the main context of this study. Research question 2 aims to identify barriers, gaps and facilitators to transition practice and use this information to further develop the theoretical map of transition and suggest new frameworks to the delivery of services and support.

This chapter has reviewed various evidence-based studies and has reflected on identified recommendations that have been suggested as good practice.

Concurrent to the process of compiling this critical literature review, the process of developing the earlier map of transition was an additional objective. The following diagram represents an extended map or transition chart (Figure 2.1). It summarises the dimensions that operate within three levels of transition planning: the individual level, the level of the school system, and the community level.

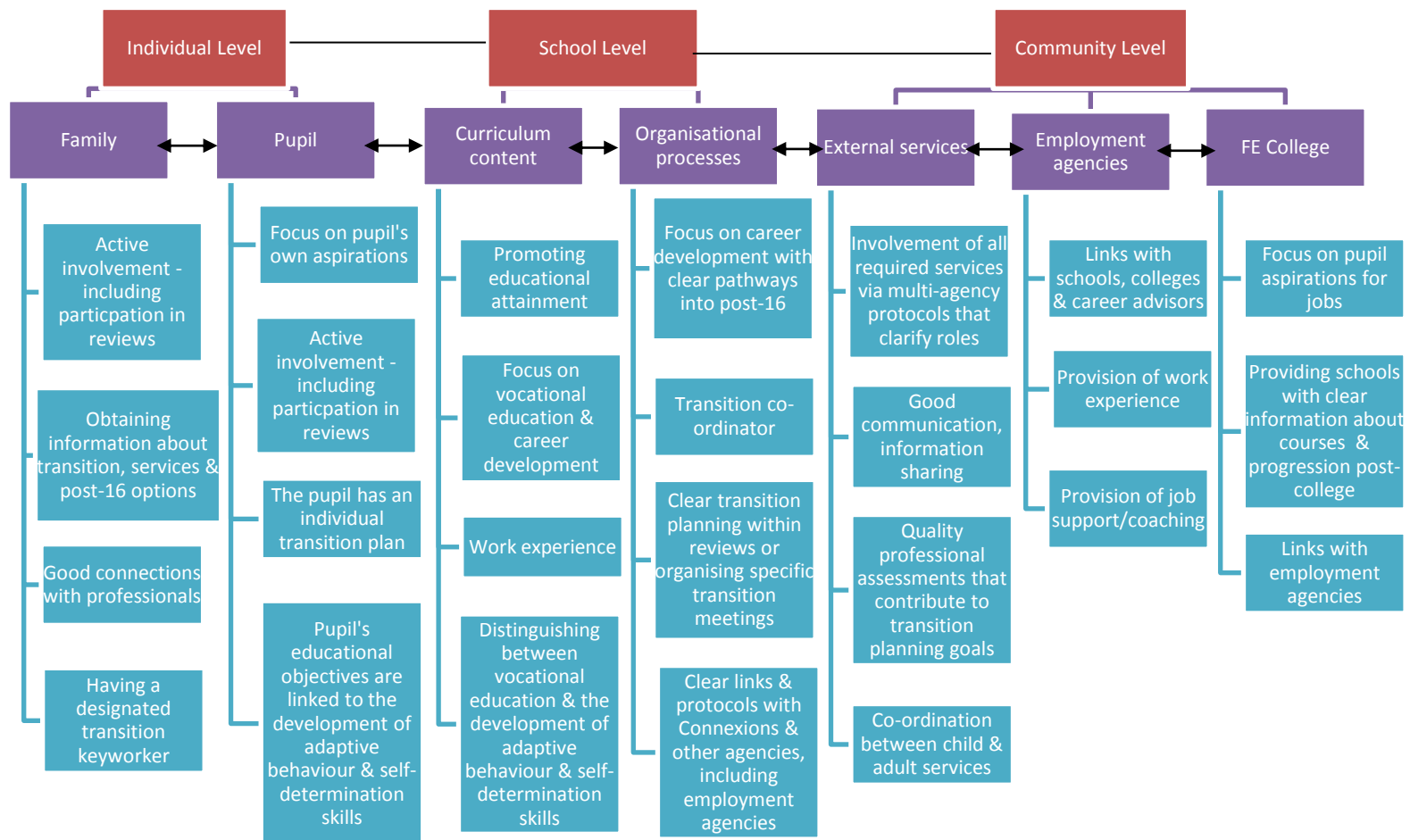


Figure 2-1: Extended map or transition chart

3 Chapter 3: Person Centred Planning (PCP) – a focus on the concept and practice of PCP within transition work and the development of person-centred reviews (PCRs)

This chapter aims to discuss the approach of PCP and PCRs within a focus on transition. The way in which PCP has become linked to transition planning and pupil involvement has been a development of the past decade in the UK. PCP is perceived to facilitate the transition process and in particular, it supports the key features of pupil involvement and family participation. As explained in Chapter 1, this study took place within a Local Authority interested in the development of PCRs within schools. This adds to the significance of this chapter and to the wider field of transition planning for pupils with SEN and is directly related to research question 3.

3.1 The rise of PCP

The origins of PCP lie within the principles of normalisation (Wolfensberger 1972, cited in C. L. O'Brien & O'Brien, 2000) and O'Brien's (1987) five accomplishments, which services need to help people with disabilities achieve – community presence and participation in meaningful activities, choice, respect, experience of valuable relationships and competence to learn new skills. Together these accomplishments constitute quality experiences in adult life.

It is important to mention that the development of person-centred working is not restricted to the field of transition. It refers to a philosophy that translates in a method of working that places the young person and other people who know them well, at the centre of a goal setting process. So PCP promotes an individualised, needs-based approach that places emphasis on a young person's wishes and interests, as opposed to a 'one size fits all' plan to service delivery and support. PCP is perceived to be an umbrella term that has been shaped into various formats, such as the McGill Action Planning System (MAPS) and Lifestyle Planning (J. O'Brien, 1987). Kinsella (2000) states that PCP is not a mass market product. Each type of

recognised PCP has been developed in a particular context to do a particular task, and none of them have been developed for universal application.

The support for more personalised approaches at transition took centre stage in the Valuing People agenda (Department of Health, 2001), with a vision of services working in partnership to develop and support a young person's person-centred plan. Education was seen as being one of these services, although the echo of PCP resonated more in policy documents about how services should operate within social care and health. The target of implementing PCP appeared to be linked to the transition between child and adult services, but Valuing People Now (Department of Health, 2009) made wider suggestions, including a person-centred approach to the statutory transition planning process and identifying planning for employment as a central objective in PCP.

3.2 PCP within transition planning for pupils with SEN

PCP at transition has often been portrayed as a tool used by social services to determine post-school destinations with consideration of the young person's strengths, needs and preferences (Kaehne & Beyer, 2009b; Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2004). Dee (2006) states that all pupils with learning difficulties leaving school, who are eligible for support from social services, must have a PC plan. Dee (2006) goes on to say however, that not all young people with SEN will be involved with social services and require a PC plan. This may infer that PCP may only be promoted for those pupils who are perceived to need the services of adult social care, and has implications on the kind of issues and plans discussed at transition. It also means that PCP becomes more of a procedure rather than a philosophy, and can diminish the role that PCP can play in the facilitation and identification of various future options for young people.

Dee (2006) acknowledged that the interactive way in which PCP is delivered can benefit transition planning and says that some schools have opted to use PCP to replace transition plans. But rather than "replacing" transition plans, other researchers have clearly supported PCP as an approach that "assists" the development of pupil-centred transition plans, making reference to the process as

Person-Centred Transition Planning (Michaels & Ferrara, 2005). This planning is characterised by collaboration and problem-solving by the various stakeholders involved. Within this context, a person-centred review (PCR) may be deemed as a PCP meeting or one aspect of the PCP approach, providing opportunity for this collaboration and development of transition plans. PCP may therefore require a series of meetings within which participants listen to a young person's aspirations so that they can then aim to brainstorm opportunities and support those aspirations within school, post-16 settings and the community.

Within PCP, professionals move from being experts on the person to experts in the process of problem solving with others (Michaels & Ferrara, 2005; Sanderson, 2000). However, this assertion is based on limited assumptions of professionals adopting a medical model approach to disability and on generalisations made about rigid professional roles in other forums, which may not always be the case. Facilitating problem solving is not selective to PCP, but PCRs using PCP methods can offer more of a forum for equal partnership and shared decision-making between parents and other stakeholders, and place the young person in the driving seat, although this cannot be guaranteed.

Many people have expressed enthusiasm and support of the values at the basis of PCP for pupils with SEN. PCP focuses on a person's strengths and abilities and the positive aspects of a person's life rather than being led by a deficiency model. It involves a process of listening and learning and it raises questions about what matters to the young person now and in the future (Department of Health, 2001; Sanderson, 2000). Its vision is for the young person to be actively involved in the decisions about their future and for increasing the extent to which support is tailored to the young person's needs and aspirations. Therefore this approach could be potentially challenging to services which are not ready to change or mould their practices. Meetings and reviews that are person-centred would be led by a facilitator trained in using person-centred methods to try to achieve these aims, usually called a PCP facilitator.

3.3 The impact of PCP

Evaluating the efficacy of PCP has become important in the light of its popularity. However there is a dearth of research that focuses on this. Mansell and Beadle-Brown (2004) and Felce (2004) state that given the central position that it has gained in UK policy, PCP has a weak evidence base in terms of impact. Kinsella (2000) had claimed that there was almost no evidence of the effectiveness of PCP compared to other approaches. He stated that although no one could disagree with its core concepts, it is “so complex that it requires extensive training, accreditation, advanced writing and drawing skills and approval by a higher being” (p. 2). In the LA in which this research is carried out, professionals have undergone training to be able to deliver and lead on PCRs as PCP facilitators and in practice these processes appear time consuming.

A large scale evaluation of the impact and outcomes of PCP in the UK was carried out by Robertson, Emerson, Hatton, Elliott, McIntosh, Swift, et al., (2005). The researchers identified positive change in areas such as, the young person’s community involvement, contact with friends and family and choice, but these benefits were variable across participants. Although participants had a variety of disabilities and difficulties, there were various limitations to this study; the age range of participants varied between ages 16 to 86 years but the majority lived in supported accommodation and none of the younger participants attended a mainstream or special school. Hence this study has limited application to the implementation of PCP in educational settings. Other methodological limitations related to data collection, for example, accessibility to the same key informant who knew a participant well could not be ascertained, and there was no information available about how often this happened in the study. This could have had an effect on reliability of data achieved.

Robertson et al., (2005; 2007) concluded that the impact of PCP may be characterised by inequalities in both access to and efficacy of PCP in relation to participant characteristics, contextual factors and elements of the PCP process. From 93 participants, 65 (70%) received PCP, and people with mental health difficulties, EBD, ASD, health problems and those with restricted mobility were less

likely to receive a plan. The strongest predictor of the development of plans was attributed to the availability and commitment of the facilitator. Other contextual factors, such as staffing issues and the existence of prior person-centred ways of working, were associated with increased chances of getting a plan. This reflects the need for resources and a 'continuum of PCP tools'.

In evaluating the efficacy of PCP, its usefulness in delivering better access to services and support has not really been addressed to a large extent in research. Yet it is an important enterprise to undertake because planning on its own may not secure access to required support that can promote positive outcomes. As Kinsella (2000) put it, it is the outcome and not the process that should be the focus, although often it is not. Emerson and Stancliffe (2004) suggest the need to identify the conditions under which PCP, or other approaches to individual planning, leads to positive outcomes.

3.4 Barriers and challenges to PCP

There has been appreciable debate about barriers to the effectiveness of PCP for young people, but according to Robertson et al. (2007) although some problems related to the introduction of PCP have been noted, the barriers underlying these problems have not been addressed. As part of the afore-mentioned wider study on the impact of PCP, Robertson et al. (2007) identified a number of barriers in relation to implementation. Problems related to facilitators, lack of time and staffing issues were common difficulties. Problems with facilitators took the form of lack of trained facilitators because those trained had either left the service or were on sick leave. Finding resources for facilitator training was also an issue. This indicates that research studies would do well to investigate not just the availability but also the skills of facilitators.

Mansell and Beadle-Brown (2004) adopt a critical approach to PCP. They claimed PCP to be an ambitious task due to the number of young people involved and the nature of people's difficulties. This presents an administrative, practical and proficiency challenge. The administrative and practical aspects include flexibility in addressing organisational aspects of meetings, and the proficiency challenge

includes the skill of applying PCP and the ability to use communication resources that enable some pupils to understand and contribute to processes that affect them.

Mansell and Beadle-Brown (2004) also view a problem of a political nature, in that PCP may not necessarily mean change in service development. The association of transition planning to the mere transition from child to adult services may be related to this view, because PCP risks becoming another bureaucratic process that facilitates “service-centred planning”. Conversely, the true implementation of PCP would require some changes to service philosophy and policy that ensures funding, staff training and supervision, a development which, according to Mansell and Beadle-Brown (2004), is dependent on who holds real power in the system. Several of the studies discussed in Chapter 2 have identified that young people are being channelled into placements and services, rather than there being more choice and opportunity to participate in shaping services and placements, although there was no specific reference to whether specific PCP approaches were applied.

According to Mansell and Beadle-Brown (2004), PCP is also at risk of not moving things beyond a paper exercise, with performance being judged by the number of plans produced rather than the quality of the plans. They refer to this implementation gap that can exist for a variety of reasons, including, limited understanding of PCP, lack of resources and weak relationship between objective setting and the daily practice of staff providing support. So for planning to translate into actual delivery of a person-centred service, these factors will need addressing. An earlier study by Hagner, Helm and Butterworth (1996) also noted gaps related to implementation. The qualitative methods used included participant observation of planning meetings for 6 individuals who were in transition from school to adult life. After 6 months, only a few planned outcomes had been achieved and participants did not think that much had been accomplished.

So it appears that there are two main types of difficulties that the literature identifies – the hurdle of actually developing a PC plan and the failure to meet goals identified in a plan. Robertson et al., (2007; 2007) found that areas that ranked

highly as barriers to implementing PCP or meeting the goals of PCP – for those people who actually had a plan – was staff having time to do work on PCP, staff shortages and thirdly, the practical difficulty of arranging meetings already mentioned above. The reluctance of people in the local community to give time and support and the availability of services (e.g. limited choice and waiting lists) were cited as high potential barriers preventing goals set being met for a person. An important point to mention is that Robertson et al.'s information on reported barriers has not been related to the complexity of people's needs (because people with complex needs were less likely to have plans), and there is the possibility that some barriers may be more evident for those with more complex needs.

Mansell and Beadle-Brown (2004) suggest that a way of ensuring appropriate planning and implementation is for PCP to be given legal weight. Providers could then be challenged if they do not deliver. Moreover, the researchers also assert that PCP cannot be effective without looking into the quality of staff skills that will help facilitate the development of young people's skills and positive behaviour. O'Brien (2004) agrees with Mansell and Beadle-Brown, arguing that PCP could potentially become an activity trap because it shifts attention from the provision of competent support. Towell and Sanderson (2004) acknowledge this criticism as a challenge and adopt a more hopeful stance. They stated that PCP must strive through both design and discovery to do better than previous other methods. Emerson and Stancliffe (2004) extend Mansell and Beadle-Brown's point about the need for change in power relations. They emphasise the need to look at PCP's benefits without losing sight of the difficulties and the requirements. The requirements involve changes in what they call system architecture – the policies and practices related to authorising, paying and contracting for services and supports – to achieve the plan's goals, because PCP applied systemically could overwhelm the system's resources.

3.5 PCP in education

The literature gives the impression that PCP has been interpreted in a variety of ways and this gives rise to differences in implementation. As pointed out by Dee (2006), PCP has permeated education and is being used in schools. In particular, person-centred tools have been developed to be used within Year 9 reviews with the aim of personalising the review process and placing the pupil at the centre of the process. The PCR can then contribute to a transition plan. Interestingly, these tools have been predominant in Department of Health publications, supporting and being driven by the Valuing People Now agenda (e.g. Department of Health, 2010c) and less conspicuous in Department of Education publications.

As explained in Section 10, the SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a) states that transition planning should be part of a pupil's annual review from Year 9. The customary purpose of an annual review is to review a pupil's Statement of SEN and give the opportunity for professionals and parents to contribute to and update the pupil's progress. Dee (2006) states that schools find it difficult to merge the dual functions of reviewing the Statement and discussing the transition plan. Dee (2006) collected various data on 12 young people over 3 years. Three of these young people attended mainstream schools. The 18 annual reviews observed showed that the focus was on reviewing the Statement and not on discussing issues around post-secondary transition. She concludes that these meetings are linked to a medical model of disability and suggests that more PC approaches could enable pupils and parents to contribute to the process and professionals to share their power.

Research studies specific to the implementation and impact of PCRs on transition planning for pupils in mainstream and special schools are lacking. There have only been a few small scale studies that focussed on using more person-centred methods to enable the participation of the pupil in their review. For example, Taylor (2007) used 3 pupil case studies to investigate the participation of young people with multi-sensory impairment in PCRs in one special school. However, this was not directly related to the pupils' transition post-16 planning.

The notion of PCP at transition appears to have taken on more significance as an operational process within adult services in England, and it has been fairly recently that the influx of training packages around PCP and PCRs has entered into schools. Considering what has been discussed so far in this chapter, particularly the notion of delivery of goals identified in plans and changes to a system's architecture, the significance of how the process of PCP leads to outcomes also needs addressing within the system that is education. American literature focuses more explicitly on the connectedness between PCP, transition and individual education plans (IEPs), offering clearer implications for school-based practice. Michaels and Ferrara (2005) state that various process challenges can exist for schools, namely, the long duration of meetings and time for subsequent follow-up, the existence of competing goals, the tension between process and outcome and competing beliefs about disability amongst team members. The collaborative problem-solving process may also involve debate around risk factors versus health and safety issues.

A PCP meeting or PCR would gather information that would be useful to writing transition plans and IEP goals (Korpi, 2008). One of the aims of a PCR is to discuss the support that will be required for a young person to achieve desired goals for the future. In American literature, the implications of this aim has shifted appreciable attention to the concept of transition-focussed education (Kohler & Field, 2003) that includes emphasis not solely on pupil participation, but also on pupil skill development and pupil-focussed planning. The aspect that I believe to be relevant within the educational context is the cautionary note from Michaels and Ferrara (2005) that PCP must go beyond planning to activate thorough implementation of transition goals and assist in their evaluation.

3.6 The core elements of PCP

To conclude this chapter, it is appropriate to summarise the core elements of PCP as outlined by Michaels and Ferrara (2005). They identified 4 main features of PCP (p. 297):

1. Identifying the problem – people work collaboratively to create a shared vision for the future and come to consensus on the identification of critical problems that require addressing. The goal is to produce a complete picture of the pupil's social, recreational, educational and vocational goals.
2. Problem analysis – identifying strengths and support needs and building relationships and community connections that can fulfil established goals. Collaborative problem-solving is a crucial feature here, whereby problems or mismatches between a pupil's goals and skills, preferred environments and desired tasks can be identified.
3. Implementation – developing action plans and co-ordinating goals across the various activities, stakeholders and learning environments. Michaels and Ferrara emphasise the concept of treatment integrity. This involves identifying what needs to be done to move from the present to the future. This should result in the production of a detailed and flexible action plan that can be modified and refined. The implementation of this plan involves school as well as community stakeholders. Kohler and Field (2003) emphasise effective pupil skill development in both school-based and community-based settings as part of such a process.
4. Accountability and follow-up – action plans are coupled up with the names of persons responsible for implementing and following up on various aspects of the plan and tasks linked to goals.

3.7 Implications for research

Considering the interest in implementing PCR in schools, it may be a challenging but appropriate task to ask how PCRs help to develop clear goals and pathways for pupils at transition. The quality and effectiveness of the PCR in engaging the pupil, parents and others, to discuss objectives for the future and how this is followed up, becomes relevant to this study.

4 Chapter 4: Methodology

“Qualitative research is concerned with describing, uncovering, understanding and explaining processes through which meaning is co-constructed in relationships and purposeful activity between people.”

(McLeod, 2011 p.47)

This chapter details the methodology that was employed to explore the chosen area of research. The main research questions central to the study are presented as an introductory framework. The ontological and epistemological assumptions made will be described, and the reasons for the selection of methods of data collection over others, clarified. The chapter will then explain the research journey through an account of the procedure and timeline of the study.

4.1 The research questions

The following research questions are significant to the study because they determine the method and data collection techniques selected.

1. What aspects of the conceptual ‘map of transition’ can be applied to transition processes in the real world for pupils in special and mainstream schools?

The aspects referred to are the key areas to explore from the literature. By this I mean the components identified within the three areas of school systems, family and external services. The research question seeks to find out whether and how aspects outlined in the conceptual model happen in the real world of schools within one local authority. Essentially the aim is to find out how schools are addressing transition planning.

2. What accounts for any underlying barriers to, or gaps in, transition work?

This research question suggests substantial investigation and subsequent discussion. It aspires to clarify barriers and facilitators to effective practice and indicates an exploration of the data to see whether it can shed light about how it

would be possible to exploit facilitators and overcome barriers. There is an open view about the outcomes of the research and about how the focus on school, family and external services can highlight areas for development or change, of both service delivery and the map of transition.

3. Does the introduction of a person-centred review (PCR) lead to more specific transition plans that address future outcomes for pupils and say how future aspirations may be achieved, compared to regular reviews?

The previous chapters have identified the importance of a pupil's review and what is addressed within this. Consequently, appreciable attention has been placed on the nature of reviews taking place. As explained in chapter 3, there has been particular discussion about PCP and PCRs and their impact. In view of more services demanding that pupils have PCRs, and considering that PCRs were being promoted within the LA, the above question is deemed important.

4.2 Purpose of the study: Methodological perspective and rationale

The questions posed do not reflect a process of verification or falsification of hypotheses about knowledge of the world of transition practice - a process notably characteristic of the positivist paradigm. The nature of the research questions about transition planning required in-depth exploration. This identified qualitative inquiry to be in a better place than quantitative methods. Qualitative methodology was therefore selected as the distinctive manner in which this research could meet its goals.

My approach to the research suggested conformity to an ontology and epistemology that involves a constructivist paradigm. This implied that the area investigated was shaped by the context and social reality of the people involved. The study is characterised by the type of epistemology that seeks to explore and understand experiences and processes within educational and social contexts of secondary mainstream and special schools within one local authority. This required descriptive accounts from key players in these settings, and as Smith (2003)

explains, qualitative approaches engage the researcher with exploration, description and interpretation. Despite common factors that may exist within the settings, it is acknowledged that the interaction between the individuals and the cultures within different schools, as well as the complex relationships that may exist with the local authority, may construct different realities. The scope of this work was to employ hermeneutical methodology to accumulate knowledge about features and gaps within transition planning experiences, and consider the meaning of these in the light of the 'map of transition' framework.

In terms of epistemology, as the investigator, I was not an independent entity of the investigated topic. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain, meanings and constructs are transactional and subjectivist. There was a transaction between myself as researcher and the interviewees as I probed into the processes around transition. I had an interpretative approach as my findings accumulated and as I proceeded with my research plan. This way of extracting knowledge necessitated a methodology that was interactive in nature and which has the potential of activating further work in the area. The interpretive research paradigm as a mode of inquiry has also been encouraged within research on PCP (e.g. Michaels and Ferrara, 2005).

4.3 The roles of the researcher

My position as researcher requires more clarification. My role as an educational psychologist has a significant place within both Local Authority and schools. Educational psychologists are key professionals at both operational and strategic levels within child and adolescent services. Within the LA, my involvement on a transition working party and later on, a transition operational group was an important development in relation to the research work undertaken. Effectively, my active participation at these transition meetings occurred simultaneously to the running of the main research project and inevitably had a role in shaping my inquiry. It yielded more informed interpretations of the area investigated, and often placed me in the role of facilitator in discussing information and ways forward. This

is consistent with a constructivist approach, as the understanding of meaning is continuously reworked, reshaped and constructed in a social setting.

As explained by Guba and Lincoln (1994) and McLeod (2011), there was a process of construction that became more informed and sophisticated, that was mediated through interaction and dialogue between and among the researcher and others. This position is also related to the acknowledgment of the process of reflexivity, defined as an awareness of the ways in which the researcher as an individual with a particular social identity and background has an impact on the research process (Robson, 2002).

There were several experiences I called 'moments of overlapping identities', instances characterised by a mesh of the educational psychologist, working with pupils, schools and families, and that of LA official and of academic researcher. I was often involved as the professional who knew about systems within schools and official procedures related to SEN. So for example, throughout transition operational groups I was at times, an 'information giver', whereas throughout interviews I could be perceived as a 'change partner' by some interviewees. There was awareness that these roles were different, depending on with whom I was interacting, the different agendas at play and the fact that this had the potential to influence the authenticity of the data gathered. It was difficult to be sure which role was perceived by those with whom I was working. In all instances, the people I interacted with were aware of my research. The management of multiple roles will require further attention in the discussion chapter.

4.4 The place of the 'map of transition' in the research process

Before I discuss the research design and justify the specific methods selected for this investigation, it is important to explain the purpose of the 'map of transition'. The literature review that preceded earlier work (Bason, 2009) outlined the map of transition as a summary of actions or processes that constitute good practice in transition.

The map was useful as a starting point of this research and it was helpful in developing more insightful questions about transition planning. This study aimed to consider this map in a somewhat "loose" way in the data analysis stage. By this is meant that I employed an open view to the data that I was gathering, and this also had to be reflected in the nature of the questions asked. For this purpose, methods such as the semi-structured interview and the case study design were deemed as appropriate options for achieving data that had the potential to expand knowledge and develop understanding. These methods were also utilised by studies that have been discussed in Chapter 2.

The map was not conceived as being a complete picture, merely as an exploratory lens that was open to change and development. From the methodological perspective, the mapping exercise was useful towards establishing a priori codes that were helpful at the stage of data analysis. At this point it is therefore important to explain the design of the entire study in the light of the research questions.

4.5 Research design

The qualitative approach consisted of multiple methods that converged to produce substantial data relevant to the local context. The design was one that involved different ways of constructing what was going on and enabled analysis to be a reiterative process which sought to check out the best interpretation of data.

The design of the study can be said to have both extensive and intensive properties (Swanborn, 2010). It was extensive because it aimed to consider the social phenomenon of transition planning within both secondary mainstream and special

schools, and to probe for commonalities and differences. It was intensive, because it aimed at being thorough about transition planning for some young people by pursuing a multiple case study design.

In the earlier stages of the research plan, I was thinking of initiating the exploratory process with a survey to parents that would help gather information about features of their child's transition experience. It was soon apparent however, that the questions I wanted to answer were more of an open-ended nature that would prove difficult to present in a brief survey. The 'what' questions I was asking were all extended to why and how enquiries that portrayed the survey technique as providing limited value to the overall intentions.

Yin (2009) states that methods like surveys are useful when the goal is to describe the incidence or prevalence of a phenomenon or when the goal is to be predictive about outcomes. In the case of this study, transition planning was not viewed as a specific entity or social phenomenon that could be studied in this manner and the study was more open and exploratory. The ability to investigate the context of the transition process would have also been limited within the use of the survey method.

Another methodology that was considered but discarded was that of focus groups. Focus groups is a means of collecting qualitative data via a small number of people engaged in informal group discussions 'focused' on a particular topic (Wilkinson, 2003). Although this type of research fits into the social constructionist perspective adopted, I did not consider this as an appropriate choice for my study for various pragmatic and methodological reasons. One fundamental reason was linked to recruiting participants; I lacked explicit knowledge about who was involved in transition and who I would select as focus group participants. The process of evaluating focus group methodology helped me to recognise that it was not best suited to answer the research questions. Issues I considered included potential complexities that could arise from dominant or silent participants and the way in which participants generally influenced one another, which would then have an impact on what they said or did not say. I was aware that the focus group approach

would not provide the opportunity to ask specific questions to particular participants. This would have restricted obtaining a rich understanding of particular views and experiences.

4.6 Research overview

Research into transition may be perceived as complex in nature because as Swanborn (2010) states, the manifestation of such a phenomenon or process often involves many individuals and collective actors on the micro-level (persons and interpersonal relations), and/or the meso-level (organisational, institutional) level and/or the macro-level (large communities).

In this study, the micro-level involves pupils with SEN, their families, their teachers and other professionals working with them. The meso-level is perhaps best represented by the school system, but the organisations or agencies that professionals emanate from (e.g. social services, educational institutions, health service) may also be included. The macro-level is perhaps one North West community or the LA in England. Overall, the research design involved a multi-method approach to data collection within these levels. A research notebook was maintained to record comments, thoughts and reflections throughout the research process. The research overview is provided in Table 4.1.

Research Question	Methods of data collection	Components	Analysis
RQ1	Semi-structured interviews (meso-level) Multiple pupil case studies (micro-level & meso-level)	Interviews with key staff members within schools Observation of reviews, document analysis, interviews with parents, questionnaires to professionals	Content analysis Content analysis/ thematic analysis
RQ2	Semi-structured interviews (meso-level) Multiple pupil case studies (micro-level & meso-level)	Interviews with key staff members within schools and external to schools Observation of reviews, document analysis, interviews with parents, questionnaires to professionals	Content analysis Content analysis/ thematic analysis
RQ3	Selected case studies (micro-level)	Observation of reviews, document analysis, interviews with parents, questionnaires to professionals	Content analysis/ thematic analysis

Table 4-1: Research Questions, methods and analyses

The research enterprise was two-fold. The initial stage of the study involved carrying out semi-structured interviews with designated staff members in mainstream and special schools. The second stage, driven by a quest to obtain

richer information about what was precisely happening for students with SEN, involved multiple case studies.

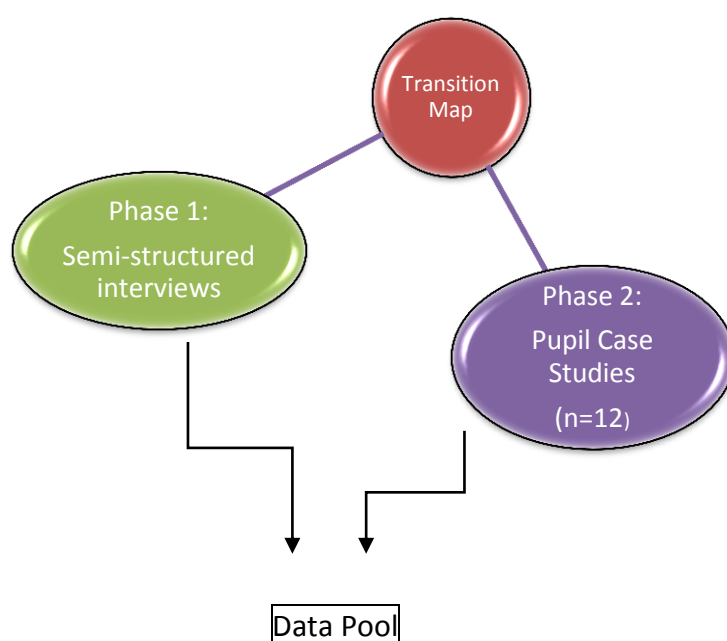


Figure 4-1: Simple overview of the research design

It is relevant to clarify that although a sample of schools was selected from the early stages, the schools per se are not to be perceived as the “cases” for this study. The semi-structured interviews involved data collection from various sources over time. The table above indicates that although the central focus of this interview phase was within schools, my concurrent participation within the transition operational group outlined earlier, yielded other potential interviewees who could contribute to my study.

The main methods employed will now be described further in terms of their methodological features, participants, procedure and data collection.

4.7 Recruitment of schools

The starting point of the research plan was set in motion by a brief presentation at an inclusion conference in the beginning of November 2009, an annual event organised by the local authority for primary, secondary and special schools. During this conference, I outlined the focus of my research and the intended methodology. The conference also served the purpose of telling schools that I would be initiating contact. Unfortunately attendance from secondary schools was poor however, and some of the primary schools were interested about prospective research about primary to secondary transition.

After the inclusion conference, I set out to establish contact with all secondary schools by writing a letter asking for their participation. The letter explained the background and aims of the study and described what their involvement would entail if they participated. All secondary mainstream and special schools within the local authority were considered as potential participants. The letter was sent to both head teacher and SENCo/assistant head of each school to maximise receipt and attention to the project. A copy of the letter may be found in Appendix 1. After allowing one to two weeks' time, the letter was followed up by telephone contact to establish whether the letter had been received and to continue giving information about the research plan before achieving consent for participation.

The process of telephone contact was particularly time consuming and at certain instances, frustrating. Over the first two weeks of December 2009 I tried to establish contact with all 7 mainstream secondary schools and 3 special schools. It was more possible to talk to SENCos/assistant heads than to heads of schools. At the end of this process SENCos from 3 mainstream secondary schools and assistant heads from 2 special schools were willing to participate in the study. It is important to mention that the latter 2 special schools were in a better position to get involved since they were already identified as pilot schools for the delivery of person centred reviews.

Lack of participation from schools were predominantly due to no contact achieved back from the school despite having left several phone messages, or not having had

a clear response that indicated willingness to get involved in the research work within the time that contact was being established. A SENCo from another mainstream secondary school did get in touch with me to participate in the interview process a few months into the research work, but this was a point at which appreciable data had already been acquired. I therefore had to take the decision not to pursue further data gathering. However, this type of study is exploratory; it does not require a large sample or every school. It does require a purposive sample, that is, schools that are special and mainstream and schools that cover each type of review.

This process of recruiting interest and participation from mainstream schools marked the start of my reflections about the research process; what did the time taken for this initial process mean about the importance of transition planning for pupils with SEN in mainstream? Was there a different outlook amongst special and mainstream settings? I started to think about the possibility of uncovering answers to these kinds of questions.

4.8 Semi-structured interviews - Schools

Interviews are a means of achieving substantive data and have been described as probably the most rewarding component of any qualitative research project (Janesick, 1998). Semi-structured interviews were carried out with key staff members within secondary mainstream and special schools between January and March 2010. These were identified as the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) in the mainstream sector and assistant head teacher in special schools because these people are meant to organise transition planning in their schools. The SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a) also identifies the SENCo as having major responsibility for co-ordinating the educational provision for a pupil in mainstream schools, and for decision-making in relation to this.

Interview dates were accommodated to days when SENCos/assistant heads were available for about an hour and a half. The interviewees were given an information

sheet, which I referred to as the 'school information sheet'. This consisted of information about the background to the study and information about all phases of the study. It also gave simple but comprehensive information about the aim of the study and how data would be used, via a series of frequently asked questions. This was followed by a consent form that outlined important aspects linked to their participation. The school information sheet and consent form were deemed important steps prior to the interviewing process, in line with good ethical practice. These forms have been included in Appendix 1.

I thought it was best to record interviews using a digital recorder. My view was, that given the semi-structured nature of the interview, it would not be possible to enable the flow of the process if I was going to have to write down what the participant was saying, which in itself would have been a mammoth task and possibly discourage the interviewee from elaboration. Recording the interview also helped my thought processes (e.g. clarifying and linking responses), had a positive effect on establishing rapport with the interviewee and was instrumental towards the subsequent process of data analysis. Before starting the interview process I explained the reasons for using a digital recorder and all the participants consented.

The semi-structured interview was perceived as an appropriate way of pursuing the exploration around transition planning. As described by Smith and Osborn (2003), the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to compile a set of questions that guide the interview schedule rather than dictate it. This format provided me with the opportunity to link questions and probe further about interesting responses that were given. It also gave the opportunity for interviewees to elaborate on their practices, identify their concerns and helped me to discover new aspects. Dyer (1995) mentions that interviews bring implicit knowledge out into the open and make it explicit and they generate detail. Although I appreciated the advantages of this type of interviewing, the less positive features included the duration of the interview and time taken to transcribe and analyse the data. The interviews generated ample discussion, to the extent that a second date had to be arranged to continue the interview process. In 2 mainstream and 2 special schools this was welcomed by the interviewees.

4.9 Interview schedule

The interview schedule designed for schools included questions in 5 sections:

- Introductory questions focussed on school processes related to transition planning
- The transition review process and pupil involvement
- The transition plan
- External service involvement
- Family involvement

The questions were developed after extensive reading about the broad range of transition issues covered in the literature review and within the map of transition. Additional questions that could potentially lead to the identification of other features or processes were added, in line with the aims of the study. The questions were grouped into the five sections and considered in terms of appropriate sequence.

The initial draft was piloted with two colleague educational psychologists to check the face validity of the questions and whether they were easy to understand. Attention was given to add probing questions that could follow from interviewees' responses. I considered this imperative to motivate the participant along with me and to prompt further inquiry. Dyer (1995) talks about interviewee motivation being a key factor in determining whether an interview is successful. By motivation I meant the desire to help the researcher in the study and to give detailed accounts.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews carried out with SENCOs and assistant heads involved discussions which triggered other potential interviewees who could contribute to the study, an occurrence often described as snowballing. Caution was taken so as to not over engage in interviews, but considering that throughout the interviews with mainstream SENCOs there was frequent mention of work-based learning co-ordinators¹, it seemed relevant to consider interviewing these staff members. Consequently, I was able to carry out semi-structured interviews with the

¹ A work-based learning co-ordinator was the school staff member responsible for programmes within the work-based pathway for pupils attending mainstream schools.

work-based learning co-ordinators from 2 mainstream secondary schools. Information achieved from SENCo interviews, as well as questions that emerged from these, were useful for creating questions for the work-based learning co-ordinators and their role in transition. Appendix 2 presents the interview schedules for both SENCos/assistant heads and work-based learning co-ordinators.

Work-based learning co-ordinators were identified in the mainstream setting, while in special schools their role appeared to be undertaken by a Connexions advisor. The Connexions advisor, however, is considered to be a person who is external to the school structure and is therefore discussed in the next section.

4.10 Semi-structured interviews – External to schools

Interviews with individuals external to school involved an interview with a transition worker employed by adult social care and another with a Connexions personal advisor. The selection of these participants was best described as purposeful. The Connexions personal advisor is a representative of the Connexions service, who is perceived to have a key role in transition planning and in assisting the young person and their parents to identify an appropriate post-16 provision (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a). This has also been emphasised throughout the literature review.

Less was known about the transition worker's role, except that she was working with some of the pupils attending the special schools. The transition worker was interviewed at the initial stage of the research work before she was to go on long leave. It was deemed important, in the light of research question 2, to explore this role further.

The Connexions advisor was interviewed at the final stage of the research, in January 2011. The advisor was attached to one of the special schools participating in the study. The decision to carry out this interview was based on several reasons. First, the semi-structured interviews in both mainstream and special schools clearly identified the Connexions advisor as having a key role in the transition planning of

pupils, as had already been established in the background literature to this work. Secondly, with the changing government agenda for 14 to 19 year olds, which was consistently mentioned throughout the entire time of this study, I was interested in whether and how this was impacting on the role of Connexions. Finally, although the case study phase, which I will describe imminently, achieved information derived from a questionnaire to external professionals, towards the final stage of the study I reflected on the need to engage more extensively with the Connexions service. On various information leaflets and other literature, Connexions is described as a service which aims to reduce the proportion of 16 to 18 years olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). The more recent studies consulted (Cullen et al., 2009, Carroll & Dockrell 2010) had identified similar concerns to the main study by Hoggarth and Smith (2004) that aimed to understand the impact of the Connexions Service on young people, particularly those at risk of underachievement and disaffection, at a time when Connexions was still a relatively young service. It was hoped that the interview with a Connexions advisor would be instrumental in providing more detail about the present-day real world and to contribute to the research questions of this study. I had realised, as Reaves (1992) has described, that exploratory research will produce surprises, insights and many more questions than answers. This probably best justifies why I decided to carry out an interview with the Connexions advisor.

The interview schedules for Connexions and the transition social worker are included in Appendix 2.

4.11 Case study phase

4.11.1 The case study as a research method

The distinctive need for case studies as a research strategy arises out of the desire and need to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2009). The research questions indicate the relevance of the case study method as they seek to explore and explain what, how and why questions about the social phenomenon of transition planning. In Swanborn's (2010) framework of complex research, the case

studies involve individuals at the micro-level, with the context within which they operate perceived to be at the meso-level (e.g. schools, external services) and macro-level (the local authority).

The best justification for the selection of the case study method is probably that given by Yin (2009, p. 18) summarised below: A case-study is an empirical inquiry that

“Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”

4.11.2 Context and selection of cases

The case study phase was a significant intensive stage of the research process involving multiple case studies. I chose to gain a more in-depth picture of the transition planning phenomenon by selecting pupils who were going through the process of transition planning to post-secondary opportunities. The case or unit of analysis as defined by Yin (2003, 2009) is the pupil. As explained in earlier chapters, the population considered was pupils in mainstream schools who were in Year 9, 10 or Year 11 and pupils in special schools who were in Year 12 or Year 13. Hence the boundary of this study is age 16 for mainstream school pupils and age 19 for pupils attending special school. The SEN office provided a list of these potential participants.

The pupil's annual review was perceived as the pivotal event throughout which aspects related to transition would be more explicitly considered. This was also directly related to research question 3. The lens was therefore focussed on the pupils' reviews, with the selection of pupils as potential cases narrowed down to one main aspect – when their annual review was scheduled. Other aspects, such as obtaining parental consent and the possibility of including pupils with various SEN were also important. All these aspects, that led to the selection of potential pupils cases, were discussed early on with the SENCos/assistant heads (December 2009) and at the time of interviews (the initial phase of the study, January to March 2010) within the 5 schools that participated.

The pupil cases finally selected attended two of the mainstream schools and the two special schools. A minimum of 8 cases was desirable, but ultimately 11 pupil cases were selected because the SENCos/assistant heads took initiative to suggest other pupils and to instigate initial contact with parents. Five pupil cases involved pupils attending mainstream school and 6 were pupils in special schools. One of the mainstream schools was not included in the case study phase of the research. This was based on the timing of pupil reviews and the knowledge of having already achieved enough pupil cases studies for the study.

The pupils experienced a range of special educational needs; moderate learning difficulties (MLD), speech and language delay (SAL), autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), social emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD), Down's Syndrome (DS), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and acquired brain injury. Chapter 6 presents an overview of each pupil case.

It was not my intention to generalise the experiences of people with SEN, but including pupils experiencing a range of strengths and difficulties intended to capture the possibility of permeating into the reality of transition planning for the heterogeneous population that is SEN. I thought that the multiple case studies would possibly achieve data that would then converge to identify common features in transition planning, as well as present opportunity to elicit differences, and contribute to readdressing the original theoretical map of transition.

The context of the pupil case studies was the annual review. This took two forms depending on whether the pupils were attending a mainstream or special school; a regular annual review in the former and a person-centred review in the latter. From this point on these will be referred to as an annual review and a PCR. The annual review was centred on the summary reports given by subject teachers and the educational objectives of the Statement of SEN. On the other hand, the PCR had an entirely different configuration, as suggested within Chapter 3. This is described in Appendix 3.

To some extent there was natural progression in the way the research developed in the 5 schools, from when initial contact was established to the interview process,

which then led on to the pupil case studies. Each pupil case involved specific sources of information or units of data collection which describes it as an embedded case study design (Yin, 2003, 2009). Since the data collection process was carried out over a limited time frame of 4 months the multiple cases can be said to be concurrent. The units of data collection within each case study comprised:

- a. Observation of pupil reviews
- b. Parent interviews following reviews
- c. Questionnaires for professionals attending reviews
- d. Document analysis

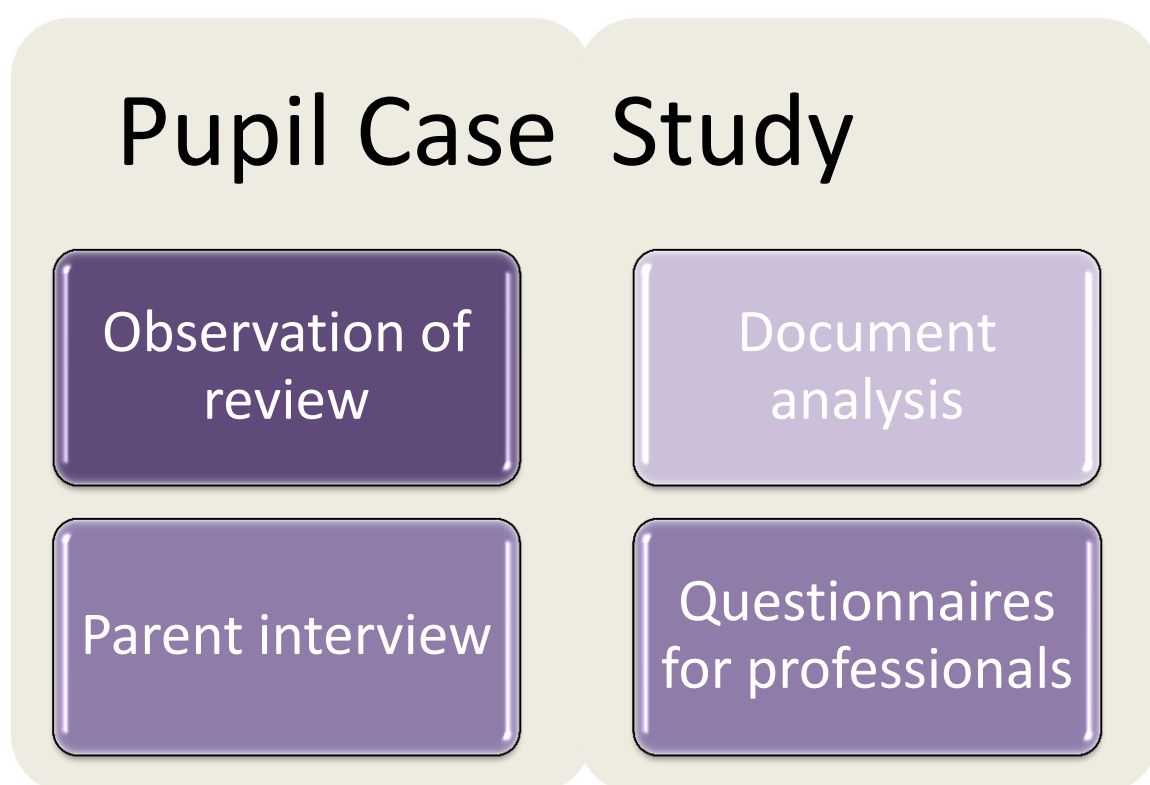


Figure 4-2: Units of analyses within each case study (n=11)

As much as I believed in forward planning, it was soon apparent that there were some problems attached to when pupil reviews were to take place and how. This

was most evident with the reviews held in the special schools, which were planned to be PCRs.

In the mainstream setting, annual reviews had to be carried out within a specified time frame due to the pupils' statement of SEN, although one school chose to carry out interim reviews depending on pupil needs. In the special schools however, the PCRs were dependent on the availability of facilitators trained in delivering reviews in a prescribed person-centred format, amongst other factors. The resulting time frame of the case study phase was March to July 2010.

4.12 Recruitment

Initial contact with parents was instigated by the assistant head or SENCo who were able to inform parents about the research and that I would be introducing myself before the pupil review. A 'parent information sheet' was given to the assistant head/SENCo to give to parents. This described the research and incorporated more detailed information by means of a list of frequently asked questions. The information sheet is presented in Appendix 4.

The assistant heads in the special schools were more successful at posting the information sheets out before the review dates, along with other information related to PCRs. In both mainstream and special settings however, I took time to talk about the research to parents before the start of their child's review, and formally gain their consent to observe the review and for all other aspects related to their participation in the study. The latter was explained by the presentation of a parent consent form (refer to 'consent form for parents' in Appendix 4) which also clarified how the information derived was to be utilised. There was also opportunity for parents to ask questions.

4.13 Observations

The above process was followed by the observation of the pupil review at school. I was introduced to all participants and I had the opportunity to say why I was there, but essentially, I would be best described as a non-participant observer. The

duration of reviews varied, depending on whether they followed a person centred format or not. The PCR often lasted between an hour and a half and two hours. My observation of the review process and note taking was facilitated by an observation schedule I prepared in the preliminary phase of my study. This included aspects derived from the map of transition, my research questions and the in-depth literature review. For example, the observation schedule included specific areas for recording the nature of parental involvement in the review, the participation of the pupil and discussion focussed on post-school transition paths. In addition, I recorded information relevant to both barriers and facilitators of the review process in relation to transition planning. The observation schedule is included in Appendix 5. Noting who participated in the review and who did not was, in itself, relevant data and this also influenced who was available to complete professional questionnaires.

4.14 Questionnaires and interviews

Following the reviews, I was able to distribute questionnaires to the professionals who attended. Professionals opted to either fill the questionnaire promptly or return it by post at a later date. The latter option did result in fewer returns but most professionals chose to complete the questionnaire independently following the review. This meant that I was able to spend time with *all* parents at school, to carry out the interview schedule prepared for them.

Appendix 5 includes a copy of the professional questionnaire and the parent interview. The parent interview was designed to capture parental views about the review process and purpose and how this fitted in with the entire transition planning process. The professionals' questionnaire was designed to obtain similar information about the review process and purpose, and to elicit their perceptions about their own roles within transition planning.

The parent interview had a structured layout, in that I followed specific questions prepared beforehand, which were delivered in sequence. The questions all had space for answers which enabled me to record responses quickly. When a response

was written this was read back to them to ensure that it accurately represented what they wanted to say.

All data collection techniques within this case study phase were designed from the theoretical background that informed this research, from the map of transition to the literature review. However, it was vital to ensure that these techniques could open up a window of opportunity to gain further knowledge from the real world so the questions were used flexibly.

Although this study is not longitudinal, the parental interview process provided the opportunity to plan for obtaining follow up data from parents 6 to 8 months following the review. Parents were asked whether they could be contacted again via telephone to establish how things were proceeding, their satisfaction with their own involvement in transition planning and whether action plans were executed. Appendix 5 also provides the questions asked in the parental telephone interview.

4.15 Document analysis

Data collection through document analysis referred to the availability of documents directly related to transition, namely information within annual review reports, and those related to the pupil's SEN. It was deemed important to discuss access to records such as Statements of SEN with parents, despite my day to day contact with these documents within my professional role. This is discussed in the section that focuses on ethical aspects further on in this chapter.

Documents related to pupil involvement were also obtained. An example was the 'My Review' booklet which some pupils within special schools completed as part of the PCR format. The booklet provided an opportunity for pupils to include information about themselves, what is important for them now and in the future as part of PCP approaches.

4.16 Advantages and disadvantages of multiple case study research

Case study research starts with previously developed theory to the running of multiple case studies involving various data collection procedures. Yin (2003, 2009)

explains that in contrast to single case study, a multiple case study design has the potential of achieving evidence that is more convincing and influential.

The multiple case study design was planned to include pupils with various conditions within mainstream and special schools, which allows results to be more helpful in making inferences and reaching conclusions about theoretical or policy implications. However, the number of cases was not important so as to achieve a specific sample size. The generalisation of results from case studies is not one that is statistical, but one that is described as analytical by Yin (2003, 2009). This study is investigative and exploratory, with limited knowledge of outcomes. By outcomes I mean results that fit into the theoretical model of transition, or that develop it further. The outcomes of this study will also be useful in making sense of transition planning for similar pupils in comparable situations, and to look across divergent groups for some general principles about transition.

It is relevant to discuss the type of multiple case study design in this section. The procedure pursued was described as an embedded multiple case study design because each case design incorporated a number of methods with different participants to gather data. According to Yin (2003, 2009) however, case studies could involve some replication that could allow for developing and refining the theoretical model between carrying out case studies. This was not possible in this study mainly due to time constraints. It would have been more achievable in a longitudinal type of study. Nevertheless, this study did seek to derive convergent evidence from the units of data collection to reach conclusions within each case and this explains the embedded nature of the case design. Further discussion about design is addressed in the next section, but the most explicit advantage of having multiple cases was the opportunity to capture aspects of the transition planning process for pupils with various SEN. The complex nature of the design also emerges from the need to consider two types of pupil reviews. The main disadvantage is the limited time available considering the involvement of a single researcher.

4.17 Design and data collection to data analysis – some salient points

The data collection process was carried out over approximately 9 months from January to June 2010 and November to January 2011. Both the semi-structured interviews and the multiple case studies were designed to provide information that would be interpreted appropriately to address the research questions posed. The course of the research incorporated various data collection techniques that were employed to gain the extensive and intensive properties described at the start of this chapter (Swanborn, 2010).

The type of case study design selected is linked to the nature of the research questions; data collection from methods (e.g. observation of reviews and parent interviews) contributed understandings of the outcomes of regular reviews and person centred reviews (RQ3). This embedded nature of the design included some collection of quantitative data that emerged from questionnaires via rating scales. So the data from each pupil case was used to interpret the operations and outcomes of PCRs for the pupils in special schools in which they were held. Similarly, information was collected from pupils who had regular reviews held within their schools and this all contributed to answering RQ3.

At the stage of data analysis, the case studies were also treated holistically, since the research questions sought patterns across cases and involved information to be converged together across cases. The data from the case studies was also linked to the pattern which emerged from the semi-structured interviews. This combination was useful in the light of the research questions that I was trying to answer. The analysis of data is considered entirely in the next chapter. The following diagram is a clear summary of the research process.

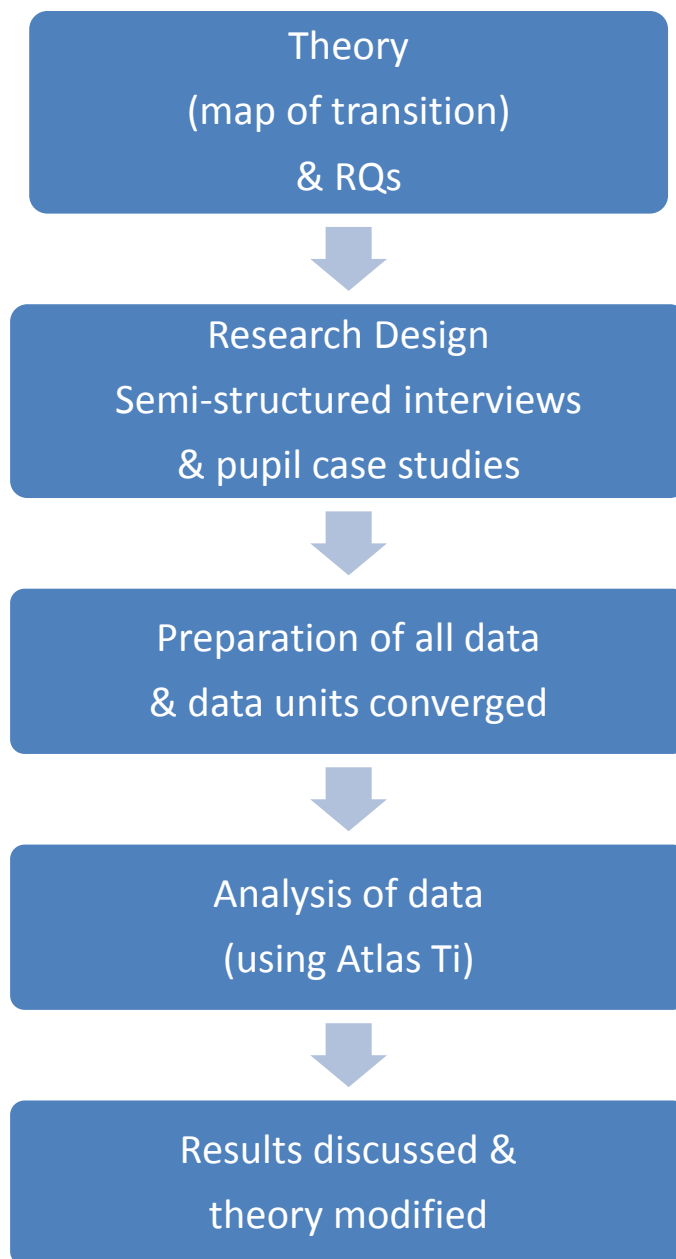


Figure 4-3: Summary of the research process

4.18 Ethical issues

Several ethical aspects were considered along the phases of the study. Ethical approval was sought and gained from the University Research Ethics Committee.

Access to schools and staff members within them, was achieved via existing professional networks given my role as educational psychologist. However, my role as a researcher necessitated further attention to ethics. Specific steps were taken to give accurate information about the aim of the research and to address the important issues of informed consent and the right to withdraw from the interview process. This was required with participants throughout all stages of the research. It was ascertained at the beginning of the research when letters were sent out to schools, followed by the compilation of separate information sheets for school staff and parents (see Appendix 1 and 4). The format in which the information was presented ensured that parents were able to understand the information. There was opportunity of going through the information face to face with participants as well, just in case parents had literacy difficulties or wanted to ask questions. Separate consent forms were also designed. These all focussed on the relevant issues of voluntary participation, ascertaining the anonymity of participants' responses or identity in published work and ensuring an understanding of how the data achieved would be used. Time was planned for these processes at the start of each interview.

Consent was also necessary to audio record the interviews with school staff. One main advantage of recording interviews was the prospect of transcription, characterised by the possibility of capturing all detailed information, with this then being available for analysis at any point of the research work. On the other hand, I needed to take account of the possibility that interviewees may feel uncomfortable being recorded and that this could impact on the nature and detail of responses. Other available options included writing down the participants' responses throughout the interview, and this option was stated as well. Although no participants throughout the first interview phase of the research expressed concern about the recording process, I decided not to record interviews with parents throughout the consequent case study phase. This decision was fundamentally

based on pragmatic reasons, mainly to reduce the amount of transcription that would have been required overall.

It was significant to note that no problems were encountered in gaining consent. This was also evident for each data collection method within case studies.

A subtle aspect that may, again, be made explicit is my position as educational psychologist and researcher, referred to as the 'moments of overlapping identities' earlier in this chapter. This could have had various effects when considering participant responses, but could appear to raise ethical issues throughout interactions with school SENCos or assistant heads more than with other participants. According to their perceptions of my position, there could have been differing impact on the phenomena of reflexivity and social desirability. The interviews also had the potential to raise issues about individual staff members or professionals. Awareness that such occurrences could happen and that they would require a sensitive approach was essential.

As a final point, my work as a LA officer also meant that I had access to pupil information on a daily basis. Despite this notion however, from the position of the researcher, it was vital to ensure that parental consent was gained to access their child's files in order to achieve more information about pupils' SEN. This is also in keeping with the data protection act.

5 Chapter 5: Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The journey of this research started with a literature-derived conceptual framework as a template of processes that have been linked to positive practices in transition planning. The semi-structured interviews and pupil case studies were the methods selected to explore whether the theoretical map can be supported in the real world.

The information derived from the semi-structured interviews, yielded data that could be utilised to validate good practice indicators, particularly when considering features at the organisational or meso-level. On the other hand, the data could also highlight mismatch between the theoretical map and actual practice with the prospect of modifying the theory.

The multiple case study design was chosen to obtain a more detailed focus at both micro and meso-levels, and it provided the opportunity to engage in analytical generalisation. If the pupil cases gave outcomes that fit the theoretical pattern, then this would be useful in confirming aspects of the theoretical map within the reality of the school community and pupil-related processes. If there are cases that show that the pattern does not apply, or that there are gaps related to specific aspects of the theory, then investigating the reasons for this will elicit data that can be used to develop the map of transition further. In engaging with this process, case study results can be generalised to a theory or model, rather than a sample to population logic (Swanborn, 2010).

This chapter is concerned with the task of data analysis. It starts by considering the transcription process leading on to how data from semi-structured interviews and case studies was compiled and prepared to be analysed using Atlas Ti, a software programme designed to aid qualitative data analysis. I will explain the process of thematic analysis and why this particular approach was chosen. Then I will outline the stages of the analysis of the content that was followed.

5.2 The preparation of data for use in ATLAS Ti

Atlas Ti is a software tool known as a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) package that is designed to analyse qualitative data. It is a systematic approach to help the researcher analyse the complex phenomena hidden in textual and multimedia data. Atlas Ti is useful in consolidating large documents in order to locate, to code and comment on findings in data. The programme also provides the opportunity of visualising complex relations between the data to engage with further interpretation. The large documents in this study were the semi-structured interview transcriptions and textual data that emerged from all the data collection methods used within the pupil case studies. The latter included the observation schedule of the review, the parent interview, questionnaires for professionals and document analysis. The first major task was to prepare all documents for entry into the Atlas programme and following this, the level of enthusiasm suddenly declined a little with the realisation that the CAQDAS package cannot do the analysis for you!

5.3 Transcription of semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview data consisted of the transcription of eight interviews; three based in mainstream schools, two based in special schools, one interview with a transition worker and one interview with a Connexions PA. A semi-structured interview with a work-based learning co-ordinator was also included in one of the mainstream school data. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and each section of the transcript was listened to repeatedly to ensure accuracy. Although this was an incredibly lengthy process, the benefits of transcribing the entire length of the semi-structured interviews of the first phase of the research provided the opportunity to immerse in the data and re-engage with the interview, know the content and note analytical comments. The transcription process therefore allowed accurate description of verbal accounts and the writing of comments also initiated the process of analysis. McLeod (2011) notes that this may turn out to be an important element of the consequent analytic framework, or it may end up being of little value.

Although conversational analysis was not the scope here, throughout the transcription process it was useful to note when a participant hesitated to answer a

question or when a response did not really answer the question asked. This helped to identify where a participant had to reflect on their actual practice versus an ideal or when a participant wanted to 'thread carefully'.

5.4 Data from case studies

The case studies encompassed several methods (or units of analysis) of gathering qualitative accounts, adding to the richness of this study. The four units of analysis were typed up and incorporated into template word documents; the observation schedule of the review was a non-participant method of achieving data. The interview with parents was essentially a structured format and parents' responses were then inserted within the specific template designed. Responses to professional questionnaires were also transferred to the questionnaire template. If additional comments were provided by participants these were added within the word documents. Document analysis consisted of notes derived from a pupil's Statement of SEN, particularly about a pupil's condition or educational need, and notes about specific documents related to transition information and pupil involvement, if these were available in files. Ultimately each pupil folder included several files of data known as data units.

The entire data were saved within a 'data folder' for ease of access and in preparation for entry into the hermeneutic unit, created within Atlas as part of the interpretative epistemology. The data folder finally included 3 folders; a folder with all interview data, a folder with all case study data for pupils within special schools and another folder with case study data of pupils from mainstream schools.

5.5 Setting up Atlas Ti for the transition project

The decision was taken to create one hermeneutic unit that would bring in the complete data from the range of sources. This was decided over the possibility of three hermeneutic units, one for each research question, or creating two hermeneutic units, to analyse the interviews and the case studies separately. The latter may have been more suitable had I engaged in a process where one data collection method was determining another, a system known as progressive

focussing. Having one hermeneutic unit was viewed a better option since the theoretical interpretation required to address the research questions needed to consider the inter-relatedness of the different phases of the study. I was after a systematic approach to the data, one that enabled a holistic understanding of transition. Across the discussion chapter however, reference will be made to individual data items (e.g. an individual parent interview or the observation of a pupil's review process) within the entire data, for elaboration or explanation.

Each semi-structured interview transcription and each case study data unit was transferred as primary documents within the hermeneutic unit. A total of 53 Primary Documents were assigned to the hermeneutic unit.

5.6 Thematic analysis

Qualitative techniques that seek to uncover patterns of meaning within participant responses are, in some way, involved in the analysis of themes (McLeod, 2011). Thematic analysis was chosen as a method of analysis because it is a theoretically flexible approach compatible with the constructionist paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006) adopted in this study.

Thematic analysis was carried out across the entire data within the hermeneutic unit, the 53 Primary Documents. This is a process whereby each topic or theme, or idea about a topic is identified. Each theme is known as a code, and data from respondents or data items are indexed against each code so that each code includes an assembly of quotes or patterns that had been identified and analysed. This procedure is detailed below and offers an adaptation of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis guide using the Atlas Ti software programme.

5.6.1 Coding

This process of analysis was characterised by the initial starting point of a priori codes that were theory-driven, to the development of emergent codes that were data-driven. This meant that the thematic analysis pursued had both deductive and inductive properties. Braun and Clarke (2006) tend to view these as opposing approaches to thematic analysis, with the inductive data-driven approach linked to research based on grounded theory.

A priori codes were originally derived from the developed map of transition following the extensive literature review and initial reflections prior to data gathering. These codes also took form from the questions devised within the semi-structured interviews and the case study methods. 29 a priori codes were entered in Atlas Ti as 'free codes'.

The analysis process involved immersing myself in all the data collected and engaging in refining or deleting a priori codes and the creation of new codes. Essentially, new codes were identified from my interaction with the participants and my interaction with, and reflection on, the meaning of the data gathered. Therefore, the new conceptualisations about what is going on involved an active role on my part and did not merely emerge from sources as descriptions, an aspect considered important by Braun and Clarke (2006). As the quotes allocated to a code were analysed, this process identified new emerging codes. This made the entire task a time consuming exercise, characterised by a thorough, systematic and reiterative process of decision making about new codes and refining a priori codes, followed by the linking and grouping of codes. This procedure across the various data sets was facilitated by the ATLAS Ti programme. The research questions of the study were key guides to the analysis and were constantly in my full view throughout the process.

The analytic process resulted in the retention of 11 a priori codes and 93 new codes. These 93 new codes included 18 a priori codes that were modified. Appendix 6 illustrates the a priori and new codes, with additional information about the meaning of each code.

Appendix 7 illustrates a sample of coded interview transcription showing how codes were assigned to particular quotes and how text resulted in single coding or overlapping codes. Appendix 8 shows two examples of data that were assigned to a specific code.

5.6.2 Creating conceptual networks with Atlas Ti

Due to the copious data, some codes had a large number of quotes assigned. The integrity of the quotes within each code was re-checked to ensure that there was a good fit between the quotes and the corresponding code. There were ample quotes per code and this has meant that I have been able to select the quotes that best illustrate the phenomenon being covered in the discussion chapter of this study.

A total of 104 codes were produced and found to be relatively stable and all of these codes were imported into a network as nodes. The following diagram shows a single conceptual network of all 104 nodes (Figure 5.1). This terminology is used by ATLAS Ti, however, I will use codes and nodes to mean the same thing.

The exploration of how codes relate to each other allows the creation of conceptual networks. Nodes can then be selected to create a spatial network that shows relationships between nodes, such as associations and tensions. The space on the page is important and allows ideas that seem to go together to be placed near to each other, while those that seem less related are spaced further apart. The main conceptual networks created will be displayed in Chapter 6.



Figure 5-1: Conceptual network of 104 codes showing relative spacing of themes

5.6.3 Establishing the reliability and trustworthiness of the interpretation

Interpretivist approaches rely upon the interpretation of the person analysing the data to produce a coherent understanding of the phenomena under study. A number of steps have been taken in this study to ensure a reliable and trustworthy interpretation. Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) discuss several principles:

- Sensitivity to context; the role of the author as an educational psychologist working at both the systemic level of the LA through involvement on working groups on transition, and, as a professional visiting mainstream and special school settings, is well placed to be sensitive to the local agendas that raise issues against which the interpretation can be reflected. The researcher is immersed in the local culture in which the study takes place. The selection of participants in the study was purposive and engaged those most likely to have knowledge and views that were pertinent.
- Relationship to the literature; the starting point for the study was the literature review and the initial 'map of transition' that was gradually refined to produce a priori codes. As the interpretation process was undertaken and new emerging codes produced to modify the map of transition there has been an opportunity to reflect against the existing literature. This study is well located in the literature, replicating and supporting many of the existing findings while also making a unique contribution through understanding the local context.
- Commitment and rigour; by this, Smith et al., (2009) mean that commitment is the attention paid to the data in order to understand the fine detail and the level of analysis is transparent in this study through what Yin (2009) describes as the 'chain of evidence' or what Miles & Huberman (1994) refer to as auditability. This is evidenced with the information presented in the appendices and within the chapters themselves. The interpretation is open to scrutiny at many levels – examples of raw data and the coding process are provided; Appendix 6 shows detailed descriptions allowing the reader to see the meaning attributed to each code within the hermeneutic unit. The relationship of the codes to each other is presented in various figures, showing both the spatial relationship between codes (Figure 5.1). Further on

in Chapter 7, the interpretation for mainstream schools (Figure 7.2) and special schools (Figure 7.3) as well as key players (e.g. parents Figure 7.4, Connexions Figure 7.5).

Despite these steps, a more positivist critique could argue that there is a possibility of the subjective nature of the interpretation leading to researcher biases. The quality of any interpretation of data can always be called into question when this has not been addressed in the research design. In this study several data interpretation checks have already been carried out, such as using multiple sources of information, triangulation of interpretations generated by different participants and member checking of interpretations through follow-up with some participants. These established approaches are usually considered sufficient methods to establish the reliability of qualitative analysis within a critical realist perspective (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000) and allow the reader to verify the internal validity or authenticity of the interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

An additional level of interpretive checking can be added to the analytical cycle and is particularly important in studies that have more than one coder in the research team. This involves checking the interpretation of the same material by different people using the same codes and is referred to as inter-coder reliability checking (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). In this study, the stability and robustness of the coding system was re-established using an inter-coder reliability check as a post hoc measure. This approach is more commonly used with content analysis (e.g. Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Milne & Adler, 1999) rather than thematic analysis. Content analysis lends itself to this approach more easily because the units of analysis and categories are determined in advance of any coding. All of the coders know whether they are assigning codes at the level of the word, sentence, paragraph and they have predefined categories into which the codes fit. This makes the analysis essentially a nominal technique in which the probability of agreement through chance alone can be calculated and taken into account by calculating the statistic Kappa. With thematic analysis, a more interpretative approach is taken in which the context of the utterance is important and this means that different coders will include more or less of the surrounding material from a transcript to

ensure that meaning is preserved in the hermeneutic unit – there is more emphasis on understanding the experience and less on quantifying responses into conceptual categories.

The protocol used in this study required an additional coder, who was not involved in the initial interpretation, to code a sample of the data and a comparison was then made with the coding made by the author. The sample of material needs to be reasonably long – but not too long. The sample selected for the coding reliability check was a section of the transcript from special school 1 and consisted of 2,884 words. The coded section was unlikely to have all 104 codes in it. So the two researchers met and discussed which codes were to be included in the sample check. In the procedure used here, the author included all of the codes already established and additional related codes, in case the second coder considered that these were important and missed from the initial coding.

The memos that describe each code were made available to the second coder through the code book (see Appendix 6) and a discussion occurred between the two coders to ensure that the second coder knew the meaning attributed by the first coder. This was to ensure that the second coder was fully familiar with the codes that would be used and decisions needed to apply them to the data. The second coder then independently worked through the sample of data and attached quotations to each of the agreed codes and came to an overall interpretation of the code (see Appendix 9).

There are various ways in which the two codings can be compared. It is possible to compare the number of words identified in the two coding sessions and contained within the quotes. This approach has a major drawback: as already discussed, different coders will include different levels of wording around key concepts so that different amounts of the context in which the code was identified are included in the abstracted quotation. Another simpler method that avoids this error involves a comparison between the number of judgements made in total by each coder and the number of agreement points (to produce a pair wise ratio). This approach has

been criticised on the grounds that it tends to ignore the possibility of chance agreements and over-estimates the inter-coder reliability (Milne and Adler, 1999).

For this study, it was decided to take an approach more akin to that used in content analysis while understanding the limitation of content analysis. The author decided to use two comparisons:

Method 1: correlational comparison

A quantitative approach involving counting the number of instances of each code being used and the correlation between the two coders was calculated. This technique has been used by other authors, although more commonly it is used for content analysis that involves the quantification of particular themes. The limitation of the approach is one of defining the unit of analysis for interpretation within the data transcript. In content analysis this is an easier task than in thematic analysis, where the meaning is more interpretive and bound by the context in which the utterance occurs. A variation of this approach used within more interpretive paradigms such as grounded theory, involves the categorisation of codes within separately defined interpretative models (Madill, et al., 2000). The level of agreement between the two coders was evaluated by looking at the correlation between both coders for the number of quotations found for each code.

Code	Coder 1	Coder 2
Areas for potential development	2	2
Barriers to effective reviews (special schools)	3	4
Barriers to transition planning (special)	5	7
College links	1	2
Difficulties with external services (special)	2	2
Facilitators of transition planning	3	7
Facilitators to effective reviews (special)	2	3
Family involvement (special)	2	2
Features of PCRs	2	0
Future opportunities/destinations considered (special)	2	4
Information for parents	1	4
Meaning of transition: External service involvement for post-secondary destinations	4	6
Meaning of transitions: focus on delivering PCRs	1	0
PCRs versus regular annual reviews	2	1
Pupils participation (special)	3	6
Pupil views obtained before the review process (special)	2	1
Responsibility for planning (special)	2	6
Role of Connexions (as perceived by special school)	3	4
School staff aspirations (special)	2	2
Tensions related to PCRs	6	3

Table 5-1 Inter-coder agreement for 20 codes found in the sample of data interpreted.

A Pearson correlation indicated a significant and moderate degree of agreement ($r=0.604$, $p=0.002$). This compares favourably with other studies that have found initial inter-coder agreements ranging from 33.9% agreement to 61.1% agreement (Hruschka et al., 2004).

The overlapping codes, in particular the overlap between the code 'barriers to transition planning (special)' and the code 'tensions related to PCRs' could account for some of the difference in coding agreement on these two codes. This was discussed by the coders after the correlation process.

Method 2: Interpretive comparison

A qualitative approach examines the meaning contained within the quotations and establishes whether the general understanding generated was the same (Madill, et al., 2000; Squires & Dunsmuir, 2011). For instance, did one coder notice something important that the other coder did not notice? In this approach it is not necessary for the abstracted quotations to overlap, merely that the interpretation is consistent. In this approach more weight is given to the meaning of the utterance rather than the length of the quotation abstracted or number of quotations abstracted for a particular code. The interpretation generated by the second coder was found to be consistent with the interpretations presented in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

6 Chapter 6: Pupil case studies

This section presents a profile summary of each pupil case. The information given about pupils serves to provide a context within which the results and discussion can be clearly understood. This presentation of pupil cases starts the interpretive approach of this study.

All pupils involved in this case study phase had Statements of SEN. Six pupils attended special schools and five pupils attended mainstream schools. Each pupil was assigned a code to ensure anonymity. For example, PS2 refers to pupil number 2 in a special school and PM9 refers to pupil number 9 in a mainstream school. Those pupils who attended a special school (PS prefix) experienced a review that adopted a person-centred format, as described in Appendix 3 (Person Centred Reviews will be abbreviated to PCR). The pupils attending a mainstream school (PM prefix) experienced an annual review process which usually involved a review of the pupil's educational objectives within the Statement of SEN and reference to reports given by teachers.

6.1 PS1

PS1 was a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties. He was in Year 12 at a special school. PS1 was able to use a wheel chair independently, although he had been experiencing some problems with a new electric one. PS1 was predominantly non-verbal but able to communicate non-verbally, and there was the possibility of extending this with the use of a communication aid.

PS1 was doing well in college links and his ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) coursework. He was present for his PCR, accompanied by another three peers and his parents. He was described as a caring, helpful person by his peers. External services present included the physiotherapist and the Connexions PA, who facilitated the PCR. PS1's mother was interested in exploring opportunities for involving her son in activities both within and out of school. In particular she wanted to ask questions about what will happen to the pupil's therapy needs when he leaves school. The parents had also previously got in touch

with school to enquire about careers advice. However there was no reference to educational objectives within his Statement of SEN.

6.2 PS2

PS2 was a year 12 pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties who used a wheel chair. He also had medical needs and severe communication and sensory difficulties and he was considered to be a pupil with high level needs within his special school.

PS2 was accompanied by his mother for his PCR, who took initiative and was very prepared about the issues she wanted to address throughout the review, asking questions relevant to both the review process itself and the future options for her son. Two LA SEN Officers facilitated the PCR and it was attended by the pupil's social worker, school Connexions advisor, school nurse and school staff.

The review predominantly centred on the need for continuity of PS2's therapy, medical and leisure needs within post-19 placements and it brought the pathways from children to adult services for pupils with complex needs into the lime light.

6.3 PS3

PS3 was a pupil with acquired brain injury who was in Year 13 in a special school. PS3 had good language skills and he was described as a pupil with a keen and positive attitude. He was doing well on a range of modules within ASDAN courses and college links, having already pursued painting and decorating sessions.

PS3 attended his PCR with his aunt who is his main carer. The review was facilitated by a social worker and it was well attended by external services. These included Connexions, a representative from the community college and occupational therapists who support people with brain injury.

PS3's carer had various concerns about future support and college opportunities suited to the needs of PS3. It was interesting to note the lack of LA representation and the lack of focus on PS3's educational objectives.

6.4 PS5

PS5 was a pupil in Year 12 attending a special school. PS5 had severe learning disability due to medical problems that in adolescence led to the identification of a specific syndrome. PS5 was a sociable young person who liked to smile and talk to people.

PS5's PCR was organised by the school and facilitated by a social worker who was not the pupil's own allocated children's social worker. Connexions were also present. The pupil was only present briefly for his review since he was due to go on a college visit. PS5's parents both attended the review and they were considered particularly assertive within the process.

Although the prospect of the pupil attending college was discussed, the review seemed more focussed on short-term planning and similar to previous descriptions, there was no opportunity to discuss educational objectives. There was also limited opportunity to discuss parental concerns around aspects related to relationships and sexuality. It seemed that the parents wanted more information about the future options for their son and keen to attend any transition events that were organised within the borough.

6.5 PS7

PS7 was a pupil with ASD in Year 13 at a special school. He was cared for by his aunt and grandmother, who were keen advocates about his needs; he was deemed to have severe communication difficulties.

PS7 did not attend his review and there was no information about his views that could contribute to his PCR. He was described as a pupil who liked practical

activities and loved music and going to the theatre. I was informed that PS7 also had a PCR the previous year, although there was no written transition plan from the previous year to reflect this. This year's PCR was facilitated by a social worker and Connexions PA. However, the pupil did not yet have a social worker from the adult social care team allocated and only school staff attended his review. Discussion about post-19 provision was high on the carers' agenda since next year would be his final year in school and they stressed the pupil's need for preparation. It was envisaged that the pupil would require specialist provision.

6.6 PS8

PS8 was a pupil with Down syndrome and severe learning disability in Year 12 at a special school. PS8 was a verbal pupil, described as cheerful, determined and willing to try new things. He was reported to have done very well on work experience placements through college courses and achieved a student of the year award. PS8 was also involved in social activities such as youth club and swimming club.

PS8 participated in his PCR and had completed a 'My review' booklet prior to the review. His review was facilitated by the LA SEN Officer and was attended by his mum, school teacher and Connexions PA. No other external services (including social services) were involved. PS8's mother was an assertive parent, keen to communicate her and her son's transition needs, including the possibility of exploring college and supported employment options.

6.7 PM9

PM9 was a pupil was in Year 9 at a mainstream school. During Year 7, PM9 was diagnosed with high functioning ASD and dyspraxia. PM9 was accessing various subjects within the mainstream curriculum and achieving well academically. He was included in activities organised within the Aim Higher programme. This is the national initiative to widen participation in higher education through activities that raise the aspirations of young people. This programme ended in July 2011.

The annual review was organised and facilitated by the school SENCo and was not conducted within the person-centred format. As explained earlier, this type of review was focussed on the reports submitted by subject teachers and on reviewing educational objectives. In this case, the subject reports were focussed on the spring term of Year 9 and the pupil's performance was rated good or outstanding across these. His behaviour and attitude was also considered to be good. There were no qualitative comments per subject area and no reference to an IEP.

PM9 was present at his annual review. The pupil was accompanied by a teaching assistant and his mother. He found it difficult to express his views at times but his mother was an active, vocal parent. The pupil had been receiving some sessions from CAMHS to help him with anxiety, however neither the CAMHS practitioner nor the Aim Higher co-ordinator were present for the review. There was no opportunity to gain information about the nature and outcome of these initiatives. For this pupil there was no involvement from Connexions yet, although information about this was relayed to the parent and identified as a goal for Year 10. Effectively, there was limited external services involvement throughout the review. No formal transition plan was drawn up although the prospect of higher education was mentioned.

6.8 PM10

PM10 was the only female pupil participating in this study attending a mainstream school. She experienced emotional and behaviour difficulties and specific learning difficulties. School were concerned about her poor attendance. At Year 9, she was already engaged with a performing arts programme 3 days a week because this was perceived to be an area of strength. Her attendance was fine on these days but not on the other 2 days when PM10 was meant to attend school for literacy and numeracy.

The SENCo led the pupil's annual review meeting. The aims of the meeting were to discuss the pupil's progress since last year and to review the statement's educational objectives. There was recognition that the objectives had not changed since the statement was issued more than 3 years previously and that it tended to

focus on the pupil's literacy and numeracy skills. The SENCo also explained that the meeting was also about transition, particularly the transition between KS3 and KS4.

PM10 attended her review although she seemed reluctant to engage with some of the people present, such as the Connexions PA. A positive relationship with a full time teaching assistant was helpful to the process. PM10's mother also attended the review and identified the pupil's literacy skills and anger management as areas of need. Besides Connexions, the external services who participated in the review included a family support worker and a targeted youth support worker based within a community project that supported families of youth with behaviour difficulties. These professionals were also looking into engaging PM10 with meaningful outdoor activities in the evenings and to prevent her disengaging from education and from engaging in criminal activity. The school's attendance manager also attended due to the pupil's poor attendance.

Although transition was acknowledged as an aim of the meeting, no specific transition plan was drawn up at the end of the review, although the SENCo did compile a list of actions that emerged from the meeting.

The parent seemed less assertive and dependent on what services were offered to her, rather than requesting any of these. Despite the parent citing literacy and anger management as areas of need, these areas did not really feature when actions were discussed and there were no suggestions for changing the statement objectives. The predominant focus seemed to be on confirming alternative provision for the pupil.

PM10 was passive during the review. Although this may have been her choice, the possibility of a more interactive format may have enhanced her participation and meaningful engagement.

6.9 PM11

PM11 was a pupil with emotional and behaviour difficulties who also had difficulties with alcohol abuse in the past. He was in Year 11 in a mainstream school but, similar to PM10, he attended a 3 day placement at a performing arts institute since Year 10. Staff members have encouraged him to pursue a career in dance once he leaves school and he was perceived to be able to achieve a GCSE in the performing arts. He has been able to achieve an ASDAN bronze award, BTEC Science (equivalent to 4 GCSE's) and Level 2 in English and Maths and continues to work towards English and Maths GCSE.

PM11 had 2 reviews organised about 6 weeks apart. One was held before he finished secondary school and the other was held about 3 weeks after he finished school. The aim of the first meeting was the Statement review and discussion about the pupil's current and future needs using the CAF. The second meeting was another CAF meeting which specified actions to meet desired outcomes, outlining the people responsible for the actions identified prior to the pupil going to a community college.

PM11 did not attend his review meetings because he was attending the performing arts programme. It was reported that PM11 was aware of his review however and that he was looking forward to going to the community college. No other documents related to pupil views were presented.

The meetings were led by the SENCo and external services present were Connexions PAYP (positive activities for young people), Connexions PA, CAMHS specialist and a specialist nurse (substance misuse clinic). The specialist nurse only attended the first meeting briefly due to other commitments and was new to the post, so was not yet known to PM11. Previous to the review a referral to social services had been pursued. Although the outcome of the social services assessment was not known to school, social services had told the parent she did not require a social worker and that Connexions was to be involved.

CAMHS involvement was centred on two aspects, the review of medication taken by PM11 and offering talking therapy about understanding his emotions. The

therapist was still working on establishing a relationship with PM11 and although it was thought that he would be ready for therapy, it was clarified that this depended on him wanting to take this on and the ease of arranging an appointment. CAMHS involvement could continue till he was 18 years.

Since PM11 was considered to be a vulnerable young person, the SENCo suggested that the CAF should remain open and follow the pupil into college. All paperwork would therefore be passed on to inform the college of the pupil's needs. The SENCo stated that the school would assist the pupil with his transition to college and will help him establish a link with student services in college. Although the compilation of section 139a by Connexions was mentioned, the PA did not elaborate on this and mentioned that PM11 will have a new link or Connexions advisor once he goes to college.

6.10 PM12

PM12 was a Year 9 pupil with ASD attending a mainstream school. PM12 had a relatively late diagnosis of ASD. His weaknesses in the area of social interaction were overshadowed by a history of significant speech and language difficulties throughout his primary years, when he had attended a specialist language unit before returning to his mainstream primary school in Year 6.

The annual review was organised and led by the SENCo. Two members of staff, PM12 and his mother attended but no external services were involved. Records indicated that somewhere along the primary to secondary transition, speech and language therapy involvement ceased to continue. Connexions were unable to attend, and there was no information given about their role. The review focussed on the reports submitted by subject teachers and on checking educational objectives within the statement.

The qualitative teachers' comments were all positive about the pupil's effort and achievement but there were some concerns about his interpretation of language,

social interaction and lack of friendships. PM12 has chosen art, graphics, geography and drama as his options.

PM12's parent was pleased with his overall progress and asked questions about Year 10's academic demands. However she appeared reliant on the school directing her to what the pupil required.

Transition was not acknowledged as an aim of the review and there was no formal transition plan drawn up.

6.11 PM 13

PM13 was a pupil with moderate learning difficulties attending a mainstream school. PM13 had worked hard throughout previous years and had benefited from interventions such as speech and language therapy groups. Now in Year 9, his parents were keen to ensure he continued to thrive within a mainstream setting.

Both parents attended PM13's review, which was organised and led by the SENCo and they were particularly proficient at advocating for their child's needs. The review concentrated on current and next year's priorities. It focussed on the qualitative reports submitted by subject teachers and discussed PM13's performance on each educational objective outlined in his statement of SEN.

PM13 participated in his review. He was able to answer questions directed to him and said he was keen to do his best, aspiring to pursue the creative arts.

Connexions were the only external service who attended the review. No formal transition plan was drawn up but Connexions explained work experience opportunities throughout Year 10 and options around diplomas.

The following is a summary of the pupil case information:

Pupil Case	Area of need	Observation of review	Parent carer interview	Professional involvement at review	School involvement at review	Documents linked to pupil involvement	Follow up with parents
PS1 Yr 12	PMLD	✓ PCR	✓	Connexions (facilitated review) Paediatric Physiotherapist	✓	✓ My review booklet	✓
PS2 Yr 12	PMLD	✓ PCR	✓	LA SEN Officers (facilitated review), Connexions, Social worker only for initial part (Children's social services)	✓	✓ My review booklet-short form	✓
PS3 Yr 13 (Acquired brain injury)	LD	✓ PCR	✓	Two adult social workers (facilitated review) Connexions, College Learning Advisor, OT & Case manager from an external independent service	✓	✓ My review booklet	✓
PS5 Yr 12	SLD (incl. Medical needs)	✓ PCR	✓	Two adult social workers (facilitated review but not pupil's social worker) Connexions	✓	Pupil involved briefly in review but no documents related to his views were used	✓

PS7 Yr 13	ASD	✓ PCR	✓	Social worker (not the pupil's social worker) & Connexions (facilitated review) No external service involvement	✓	Pupil absent from review. No documents related to his views were used	X
PS8 Yr 12	DS & SLD	✓ PCR	✓	LA SEN Officer (facilitated review) Connexions	✓	✓ My review booklet	X
PM 9 Yr 9	ASD & Dyspraxia	✓	✓	SENCo chaired meeting No external service involvement	✓ SENCo & TA	Pupil present but no documents related to his views were used	X
PM10 Yr 9	SEBD & SpLD	✓	✓	SENCo chaired meeting Connexions PA Family Support Work Targeted Youth Worker Attendance Manager	✓ SENCo & TA	Pupil present but no documents related to her views were used	X

PM11 Yr 11	SEBD	✓	✓	SENCo chaired meeting Connexions PA & Connexions PAYP CAMHS specialist	✓ SENCo & TA	Pupil absent from review. No documents related to his views were used	X
PM12 Yr 9	ASD & SAL	✓	✓	SENCo chaired meeting No external service involvement	✓ SENCo, TA & Progress leader	Pupil present but no documents related to his views were used	✓
PM13 Yr 9	MLD	✓	✓	SENCo chaired meeting Connexions	✓ SENCo	Pupil present but no documents related to his views were used	X

Table 6-1: Summary of Case study information

Notes for Table:

PS = Pupil in a Special School

PM = Pupil in a Mainstream School

X = Contact with parents was attempted twice by telephone but was unsuccessful

Additional Notes: Pupil involvement is not synonymous with active involvement in this table. For some of the PCRs teachers brought a 'My review' booklet. This booklet is meant to be prepared by or with the pupil prior to the review. In one of the special schools the quantity of the information in the booklet was reduced for some pupils indicating some element of differentiation across pupils. However, completed booklets were not always shown or used throughout all reviews within the same school.

7 Chapter 7: Results and Discussion

7.1 Setting the scene

This chapter extends the analysis of data at an interpretative level. It aims to answer the research questions with reference to previous literature. It also discusses findings in the light of current changes in government policy. Essentially, the answers to research question 1 and 2 are at the heart of the analytic process initiated by a priori codes, to the journey within the social constructionist epistemology that led to the generation of new emergent codes and to modification of some of the existing a priori codes. In thematic analysis a particular theme may have had more “presence” in some data items than another but, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006), although presence or prevalence can be relevant, the significance of a theme was predominantly determined by the research questions. Appendix 8 includes examples of quotes associated with a code. Some quotes were linked to more than one code. This discussion includes quotes that are deemed best to fit the meaning derived from the coding process.

Working within a constructionist framework meant that the context or conditions within which themes emerged from participants was important to the analysis. This indicated that the meaning and experience of transition planning in special and mainstream schools may differ in various ways. This discussion is therefore based on the premise that it is important to pull out similarities and differences and reflect on them, because this could influence developments about future service delivery. It is also linked to the objective of carrying out transition research relevant to both mainstream and special settings from a non-reductionist perspective.

In this study, the discussion of data is derived from 3 mainstream schools and 2 special schools and the 11 pupil case studies within these. The mainstreams schools will be referred to mainstream school 1, 2 and 3 and special schools will be annotated as special school 1 and 2 in the illustration of quotations. For the case studies, 6 of the pupils attended the special schools (PS1-PS8; no pupils were assigned acronym PS4 and PS6) and 5 attended mainstream schools (PM9-PM13). Four pupils attended special school 1 and two pupils attended special school 2. Three pupils attended mainstream school 1 and two pupils

attended mainstream school 3. Mainstream school 2 did not participate in the case study phase. This decision was based on the timing of pupil reviews within this school.

This chapter reflects the immersion of the researcher in the data. The elaborate coding process was predominantly derived from the interviews, which was then substantiated by the case study data within the hermeneutic unit. The review observation schedule and the parent interviews in particular, enhanced the quality of the analysis.

This chapter is presented according to the research questions (RQs) of this study. The RQs are particularly broad in nature indicating the extent of the investigation.

- RQ 1: What aspects of the conceptual 'map of transition' can be applied to transition processes in the real world for pupils in special and mainstream schools?
- RQ 2: What accounts for any underlying barriers to, or gaps in transition work?
- RQ 3: Does the introduction of a person-centred review (PCR) lead to more specific transition plans that address future outcomes for pupils and say how future aspirations may be achieved, compared to regular reviews?

The 3 RQs are inter-related and there may be some overlap across the discussion of the RQs in order to provide a complete, connected understanding of transition planning.

The majority of previous studies about transition have focussed predominantly on pupils leaving special schools. This study however has investigated transition planning within both special and mainstream. The results suggest similarities and differences between the two contexts and across individual schools. In view of this outcome, some sections of this discussion may discuss data from mainstream and special schools separately to aid organisation and clarity.

7.2 RQ 1: What aspects of the conceptual ‘map of transition’ can be applied to transition processes in the real world for pupils in special and mainstream schools?

The original ‘map of transition’ which triggered this research work started to be modified throughout the extensive literature review presented in Chapter 2. The developed framework at the end of Chapter 2, illustrated the components that were linked to good practice in transition planning for pupils with SEN. RQ1 is concerned with using the research data to explain the way in which transition planning exists in the real world of schools in one NW borough.

This discussion starts with a central outcome of the study, one related to the meaning of transition planning. The sections that follow will then consider findings relevant to the various component areas of the ‘map of transition’ as informed by the literature review. For this reason, the developed map is presented here again and the discussion of RQ1 is presented according to the main component parts of this framework (See Figure 7.1). The codes that emerged from the analysis will permeate throughout the entire sections of this chapter. The codes that help to answer the research questions are succinctly represented by two conceptual maps; one for mainstream (Figure 7.2) and one for special schools (Figure 7.3). These conceptual maps were derived with the help of Atlas Ti and provide an overview of the key outcomes to be discussed.

It is acknowledged that engaging in the process of unravelling the real world of transition can also start to provide information related to RQ2, namely identifying gaps in transition work, or even contribute to information that can possibly help to extend the conceptual map.

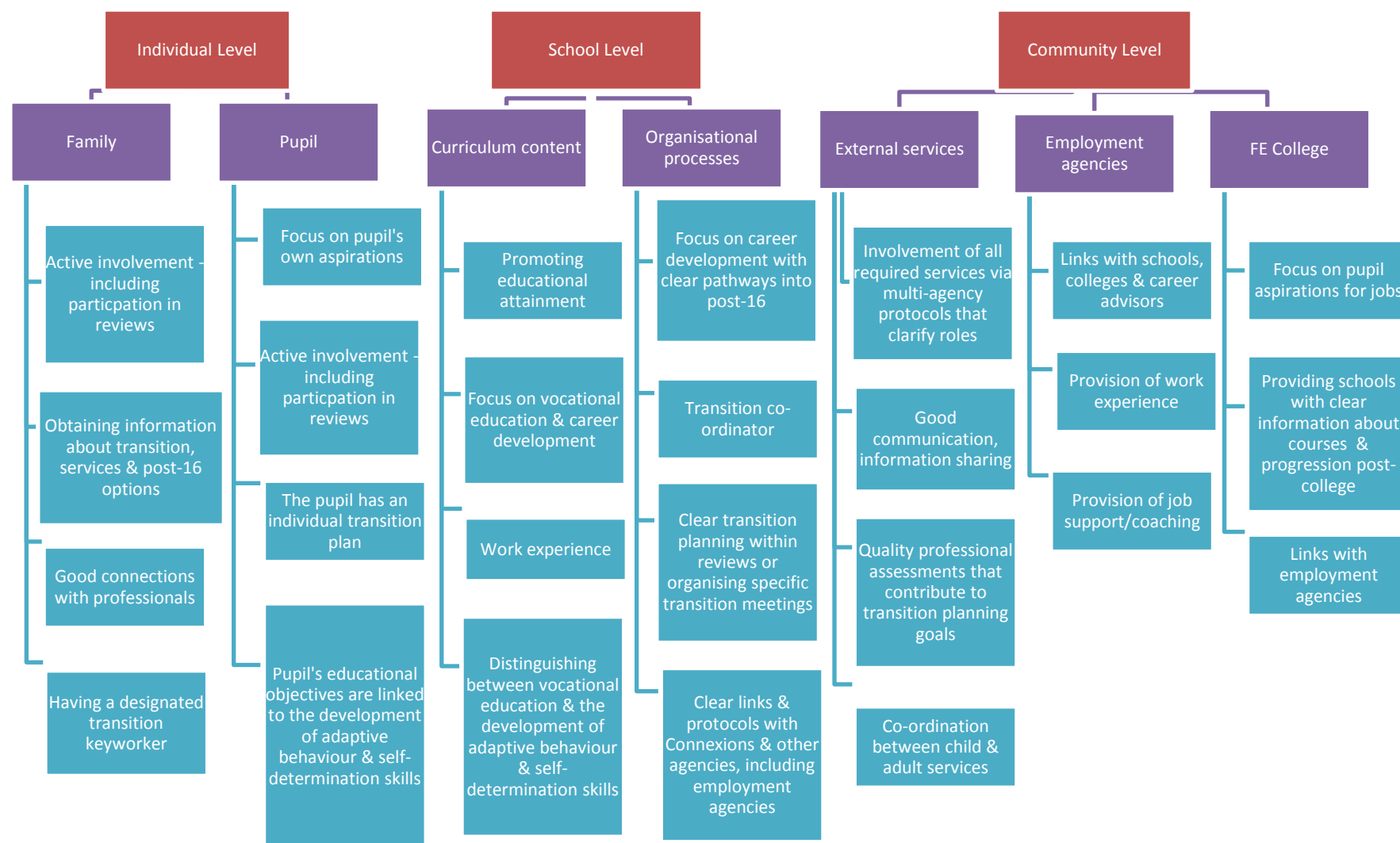


Figure 7-1: Extended map or transition chart from the literature

7.2.1 The meaning of transition planning

Schools' understanding of the notion of transition planning is a central outcome of this research and it is therefore appropriate to begin with this. The understanding of transition was derived from the codes related to school processes that SENCos and assistant heads said they had in place. The concept of transition planning was perceived differently between mainstream and special schools. In mainstream, transition planning was predominantly talked about within the context of movement between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Specifically, it was perceived along the lines of choosing subject options at Year 9.

"So as far as transition planning, what you are really looking at is how that links in to the transition from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 and things around the option choices that a young person makes and what they may be thinking of following on from Key Stage 4. That is very difficult anyway, for young people to make those sorts of choices and decisions"

SENCo, mainstream school 1

"I think it starts at Year 9 with helping pupils to choose their options, ready to prepare them for a career. Even though we don't really speak about it in that way but I think that's when it all starts doesn't it, picking the right options, to study the right GCSE's, to take them into the further education they want to go into."

SENCo, mainstream school 3

In mainstream schools, SENCos did not appear to adopt a long term outlook to the concept of transition planning, despite Code of Practice guidance on Transition Reviews (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a, Section 3.16, p. 29). The focus was option choices in Year 9, and decisions about option pathways were likely to be determined by pupils' educational achievement and views of the school's senior management team.

In special schools, transition took a less transient form and was considered from a holistic perspective of preparing for life after secondary school. Although there was some focus at the school level, what was going on within the special school per se emerged more as a peripheral concern for assistant head teachers, compared to two other characteristics that took precedence. The first was the importance of involving external services that were perceived to be required to determine post-secondary destinations. Secondly, within this

focus, the meaning of transition planning also meant holding PCRs in Years 12 and 13. This was seen to be a different gathering that provided a forum for discussion and it replaced the organisation of regular annual reviews and delayed the expected age 14 Transition Review.

"...you will be saying you have 2 years from this point, are Adult Social Services involved? Have you been allocated an Adult or Transition Social Worker? Do you have a social worker? Because some students may not have a social worker even at this point, if they have not gone through the children's team. They may have never had a social worker so they may not be aware that once they get to 19 and they leave school they may need a social worker to flag up post-school opportunities outside of education. So at 16, we would start to talk about this, we would know basically...and we would be saying that we need to make a referral to social services.

Assistant head, Special School 2

"For the last 2 years we have become involved in the person-centred transition reviews that have been trialled within the LA"

Assistant head, Special School 1

It is evident that some tensions about the process of involving external services already emerged in the special schools' perception of transition planning. However, the important aspect that was noted was the lack of reference to features within the school curriculum, other than the college links and the delay in considering transition planning in Year 12 or 13 rather than Year 9 in special schools, similar to the findings of Dee (2006).

In all three mainstream schools the SENCos appeared to struggle with the concept of transition planning linked to post-16 opportunities. They were more inclined to associate the concept with transition into, than leaving, secondary school, even though I had explained the purpose of my study and provided the relevant information sheet beforehand. The existence of a transition co-ordinator role, as indicated in the developed map of transition, was more likely to be linked to Year 7.

"I am better with the transition from Year 6 to 7...so I am a little bit unprepared because the involvement I have in transition from year 9 to GCSE is obviously the statement reviews, you know, reviews of the statement which I hold every year anyway. As far as I am aware the focus of transition for me and what I am asked to do is more Years 6 to Year 7"

SENCo, mainstream school 2

This seems to confirm the thoughts shared in the opening chapter, that within the series of staged educational transitions, the primary to secondary transition can be seen a central focus for most secondary SENCos, because they are required to be concerned about the needs and difficulties of those pupils who are coming to their school.

The position of post-16 transition planning for pupils with SEN does not appear to feature high in the list of priorities of mainstream schools. Further reflection on the reasons for this low profile of transition planning is inevitable. A key explanation is the fact that there could be more pressing competing priorities. Besides the Year 6 to 7 transitions, secondary schools are encouraged to be most concerned with academic achievement because this is a key evaluative factor of their success. Consequently, although the promotion of educational achievement is an aspect of good practice (see developed map of transition), it is also a factor that could risk selectivity of pupils, and possibly question the existence and practice of holistic transition planning for all pupils with SEN. There may be wider implications in terms of inclusive educational practice, as those pupils with lower academic attainments could be at risk of exclusion from systems of support that can help them explore post-16 options, and hence risk becoming NEET. This is consistent with views expressed in the literature (e.g. Department for Education, 2010c, Aston et al, 2006).

On the other hand, assistant head teachers in special schools espoused the view that transition planning was about starting to plan for the future. Both schools claimed that Year 9 was too early to start to do this if pupils were with them until Year 14. This suggests that they are unlikely to follow Code of Practice guidelines at Year 9. The meaning of transition planning for special schools was linked to the focus on what was next for young people after secondary school, and predominantly related to two aspects; delivering PCRs and involving external services. The process of transition planning was likely to be linked to the prospect of involving or commissioning external services, a matter that has been highly associated with adult future destinations of young people with more severe and complex SEN. This emphasis however, may serve to distract teachers and school staff from other equally important aspects of transition planning, an outcome of this study that will be revisited within this discussion.

7.2.2 Further outcomes related to organisational processes: mainstream schools

There were several generic school processes which SENCoS thought would relate to transition planning, for example, half termly academic progress checks, even if these were not recognised explicit transition planning processes for pupils with SEN. The organisation of events, namely a Year 9 options evening for parents and pupils, was identified as a key event open for all pupils and parents, and was mentioned by all three mainstream schools.

“...so in general the school, and this is not specific to SEN, they have an options evening when all the different packages get introduced to them, you know, the different pathways that they can follow”

SENCo, mainstream school 2

There were also events specifically targeted to promoting the future aspirations of young people with SEN. These events, namely, the Aiming High activities were offsite and organised by people external to the school, within the LA, but SENCoS appeared to have variable information about their content or which pupils would have the opportunity to be involved in these. However, it is likely that the Aiming Higher co-ordinator would have been liaising with another member of pastoral staff and not with the SENCo.

In discussion about internal processes, SENCoS mentioned various roles within Senior Leadership who had responsibility for the option pathways pupils could be directed on to. Progress leaders and work-based learning managers were identified staff members within this group. The language used seemed to reflect the notion that progress leaders' perceptions of pupil ability and characteristics such as pupil behaviour, could have an impact on decisions about pathways pursued by pupils.

“As I say there are some youngsters that we would identify, especially at SA+ and I am thinking of youngsters as we speaking now who we have already anticipated that they are going to have some difficulties managing the transition into Key Stage 4. So we would be looking at, for example, we do have a Vocational work-based skills manager who would also link in with, as part of those pathways, because for some of our youngsters we recognise that from Key Stage 3 into Key Stage 4 their needs may be more effectively met, through that particular pathway.”

SENCo, mainstream school 1

Considering the range of pathway options available, there appeared to be limited information about these options and how choices could be linked to post-16 planning for pupils with SEN. There were no established organisational processes within school that were specifically aimed to provide additional support to pupils with SEN and their parents around choices and decision-making. For example, there seemed to be no action taken to ensure that teachers attending the options event would be aware of pupils with SEN, or that progress leaders attended pupil review meetings. SENCos expressed variable opinions about the need for these initiatives, other than generic information. The SENCo in mainstream school 3, for instance, mentioned she would like to do more:

“I think as well as far as our young people...I think it’s really about involving the progress leaders...although the progress leaders have an interview they don’t always have the capacity to attend the actual reviews and I think it’s important they do need to be at those reviews”

SENCo mainstream school 1

Q: “So what about pupils who are on school action plus or have a statement would you do something different for those children who say, may need more explanation about what the options available are about?”

A: No. That’s where I’m hoping to have me there as well to explain, but then I don’t know everything about every subject, I know what the pathways are or rather what exams they do, but it’s all by explanation and if the teacher does not know the pupils it is not always ideal...”

SENCo mainstream school 3

This reality can appear to make the notion of individual agency (Heinz, 2009) an important attribute, particularly for pupils on SA+. The ability to take initiative and negotiate the options available can determine the quality of transition pathways (Yates et al., 2010) which could put these pupils at SA+ at a disadvantage.

The case studies indicated that for pupils with a Statement, help could be achieved through the informal support of the SENCo or Connexions PA, particularly if parents were articulate and assertive about gaining more information and support. For example, PM13’s parents

had gone a step further after the assistant principal had spoken to pupils about their options, and requested a meeting with the pupil's form teacher to clarify his options. Hence, in view of reduced individual agency Heinz's principle may need to extend to parental agency.

The main organisational process within mainstream schools that was distinct to pupils with a Statement was the **annual review**. The main purpose of the annual review was essentially the maintenance or revision of the Statement. However, the case studies showed that this was the forum for parents to bring issues or questions, including those related to the longer future. As discussed within the literature review, pupils at SA+ were unlikely to have organised reviews that could potentially bring up transition issues. Two of the three mainstream schools participating in the study said they organised reviews for some pupils at SA+ if needed. However, this would not necessarily relate specifically to transition planning. Meetings could be organised by school or requested by a parent to address specific problems.

The data also suggests that in mainstream schools, transition planning from secondary school is highly dependent on the **Connexions advisor**. The presence of the PA at annual reviews, their separate meetings with pupils and particularly at Year 11, the compilation of the Section 139a document for pupils with Statements was relevant to young peoples' support in FE. As one SENCo described, it was more about what the Connexions PA did rather than what the school did because it was Connexions who worked with college co-ordinators. Connexions were also principally mentioned in terms of what SENCos' valued about the transition process:

"...the opportunity to reflect on the young person you know in terms of their transition from Key Stage 2 to 3 over those three years, to reflect on the needs of those young people and then to look at and focus on the Key Stage 4...needs of that young person given that you know some of those needs may well change, but it gives you the opportunity to get, for example, connexions on board early."

"I think that Connexions really are the only external agency that has quite a significant role in transition."

SEnCo mainstream school 1

“Obviously in Year 9 we invite Connexions as well so that they can feed in and that is when the process starts for students to choose their options...we’re very lucky we’ve got a really good Connexions worker who is proactive and she always makes sure that she is fully aware. She knows exactly who’s who and she obviously gets invited to the annual reviews at Years 9, 10 and 11, which she attends and this has been really useful.”

SENCo mainstream school 2

This would suggest that Connexions had specific involvement with pupils with a Statement of SEN (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Polat et al., 2001). However, involvement of pupils at SA+ with Connexions was variable across mainstream schools, often depending on the capacity of the school’s Connexions PA.

“They (Connexions) would focus on the children who have the Statement of SEN but if there were any other youngsters who we felt would benefit from their input then they could be directed. But I suppose that it is a capacity issue for Connexions, as with other services really.”

SENCo, mainstream school 1

The interview with the Connexions PA showed that because of a higher proportion of pupils with SEN at SA+ than with a Statement, Connexions would often also support some pupils at SA+ who may be perceived as vulnerable or those with a clear diagnosis of a condition such as ASD, who according to their criteria, would be considered as LDD.

“We are trying to look at those with a statement or a clear diagnosis of a...what we are trying to do really is...because the SEN register could have 4 pupils with Statements and 70 at school action plus.”

“I mean it is one thing talking about SEN, because this is Code of Practice and we have it all laid out. I think as far as who we call as LDD, what we agree is that it is everyone with a statement of SEN and those at SA+ who have a clear diagnosis of some sort”

Connexions PA

It was interesting to note that external services often thought that a diagnostic label meant that school would then seek to obtain a Statement of SEN. Having a Statement with SEN emerges as a possible key to open the door of the complex that is transition planning

because it was likely to involve access to services like Connexions. Having a CAF in place also emerges as significant. This study highlights the apparent association between a diagnostic label, having a Statement of SEN and visibility to services, particularly for those who have a clear responsibility to get involved with pupils who have a Statement, although this is also dependent on the SENCo involving these services, as will be seen later. Still, there is possible variability in access to services by pupils on SA+, an outcome that requires more discussion within RQ2, particularly in the drive for LAs to reduce Statements following the Audit Commission Report (2002) and in the light of the more recent Ofsted (2010) review about Statements.

Connexions were generally invited to attend reviews for pupils with a Statement from Year 9, though their attendance was variable. Hence the process of organising a review and inviting Connexions is identified as a noteworthy feature of transition work, as indicated within the developed map of transition. Case studies showed that attendance from Connexions influenced transition focus within reviews. In the case of PM13, the Connexions PA's attendance at his review was helpful because in asking questions about option pathways it transpired that the pupil was not really aware of what the diploma option would involve when asked. Once again this is indicating the risk of variable quality and quantity of information to pupils with SEN at the stage of option choices. This finding will continue to be dealt with in the section that considers the role of Connexions more extensively.

7.2.3 Further outcomes related to organisational processes: special schools

In special schools, although there was more understanding of transition planning in terms of future outcomes after secondary school, the predominant focus on the organisational and structural processes of the PCR superseded the wider notion of transition planning. This may be linked to the pressure from the LA to try out this review format. When I reflected in between questions asked throughout interviews with special school assistant heads, I noted the tendency for respondents to reply to my questions from the context of the review process rather than the transition work carried out within schools and beyond reviews. So questions about other transition planning aspects, such as work before Year 12 or family

involvement were interpreted from a review perspective. Even upon clarification, it took some time for the assistant heads to understand why I was also investigating transition planning from the perspective of curricular and organisational processes or from the work school did with parents. This may reinforce the notion of transition planning predominantly from the perspective of institutional transitions (Mitchell, 1999) and the problems associated with this (Beresford, 2004; Hudson 2006), with more research concern directed to transitions to adult services rather than the extent to which pupils are assisted by school (Polat et al., 2001; Rusch et al., 2009).

Q: "So besides the review as such, as a school would you do other things that are associated with transition planning before that time comes?"

A. "They work with Connexions. They have a Connexions interview. So their ideas about where they want to go after they leave school could be taken into account."

Assistant head, Special School 1

Similar to mainstream schools, special schools emphasised the role of Connexions as a key process and their presence within schools served to clarify some of the ambiguity around responsibility for transition planning.

Q: "How do you view the role of Connexions?"

A: Absolutely invaluable. Our Connexions PA starts coming from Year 9 to all our school reviews and he gets to know the young people and builds a relationship with families. So that when he starts to write his report, which he starts to write from age 16 onwards, about what he has done with that young person, then he has a very good idea. He knows the parents, they know him and that is absolutely invaluable to parents."

Assistant head, Special School 2

Connexions were also viewed as the hub of transition information for parents and as the key people who were likely to liaise with social care after pupils left school. This inevitably has implications in the light of current changes happening in relation to independent careers provision and the impending demise of the Connexions service.

7.2.4 Curriculum content and opportunities for work experience: mainstream schools

As mentioned earlier, it is possibly an expected outcome that mainstream schools will hold academic achievement high in their list of priorities, a suggestion put forward also within the transition literature (e.g. Burchardt, 2004). The data within this study indicates that if pupils who had a Statement were making progress and in particular, did not manifest behaviour that was challenging, then the academic curriculum was promoted at the options stage of Year 9. These tended to include pupils with high functioning ASD and pupils with mild learning difficulties. Decisions about option pathways seemed to be dependent, to some extent, on the nature of the pupil's SEN and on teachers' achievement data. So for instance, achieving a Grade C in Maths would determine whether a pupil could go beyond doing entry level courses.

The school interviews indicated a degree of flexibility in offering pupils opportunity to pursue both academic and vocational education (e.g. via BTEC and Diploma qualifications) which could include college visits. This means that some pupils with a Statement of SEN may be likely to benefit from mainstream school because it increases their chances of obtaining qualifications. This would support Mitchell's (1999) argument that destinations could be largely determined by the type of school attended.

"Yes the particular people I am talking about do have statements of SEN. There is one young person, a very complex young person with mental health issues and emotional behavioural needs, some learning difficulties too, but he is a very talented dancer. One of the things that we have looked at, and we have modified the pathways and the routes to very personalised, in that he attends a college for Performing Arts, where he is doing BTEC qualifications, but he is also on site twice a week where he is in mainstream lessons following English...and this particularly focuses on English and Maths for him."

SENCo, mainstream school 1

Within this view there appears to be the assumption that pupils in mainstream will possibly continue to some post-secondary academic pathway. So **high staff aspirations** could serve to ensure some element of flexibility that can promote more positive transition outcomes

for pupils. High staff aspirations could also have an impact on psychological factors such as young people's motivation.

"They are mainstream young people regardless of what their difficulties are, they are within mainstream, so the sort of support we would be looking for post-16 would be really around whether they would be going into the local community college, or if they were looking for some training or an apprenticeship package."

SENCo, mainstream school 1

It is essential to point out again that the shifting national political agendas during the time of this study were having an impact on schools. At the interviews, SENCos mentioned a lot of imminent change around curriculum in secondary schools, and staff members were awaiting more information about these changes.

According to SENCos' responses, the curriculum addressed transition-related skills such as independence and problem-solving skills because these were embedded within accredited courses (e.g. BTEC), similar to the mainstream school in Beyer and Kaehne's (2008) study which had school-based vocational activity in the form of qualification courses.

In terms of work experience, at Year 10 all mainstream secondary pupils, including those with Statement of SEN, went out for 2 weeks work experience. For some pupils with SEN, however, work experience took the shape of the work-based learning (WBL) pathway from Year 9. Pupils on SA+, particularly if pupils had social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD) and were perceived to be disengaged from the academic curriculum, were more likely to be included in this pathway.

"If for example they are a young person who is quite challenging in their behaviour, you would be looking at work based provision that offers quite a structured approach that is able to cater for their behavioural needs"

SENCo, mainstream school 1

This pathway was considered to be the alternative route and pupils could be offsite for up to 4 days in the week. From interviews carried out with SENCos and WBL co-ordinators in mainstream schools 1 and 2, it transpired that the WBL co-ordinators were responsible for

overseeing the needs of these pupils. They would then liaise with external providers and with Connexions to ensure that all young people manage to secure post-16 placements.

For those pupils with a Statement for SEN that did not include SEBD work-based learning seemed not to be an encouraged option. These findings reflect some degree of tension, since it appears that a specific group of pupils, those with SEBD and without a Statement, are being channelled into WBL pathways. It also implies that disaffection can be perceived as a within-child problem, without time taken to make the necessary environmental adjustments that could help these young people to pursue other options, which could lead to different transition outcomes. There is also some ambiguity around how the decision for WBL is taken.

Q: "Do the pupils selected (for WBL) include pupils with a statement of SEN and those on SA+?"

A: "I haven't got any statemented pupils. I just have pupils on SA+ and SA. The SENCo and Senior Management Team would decide whether WBL is the best move for students"

Q: "So how is the decision taken? Pupils with a statement have an annual review whereas pupils on SA+ may not necessarily have annual reviews, so how is the decision to go on WBL taken?"

A: "They would still have their reviews and it depends on the timing of the reviews (hesitates)..."

Later on within interview:

"Once they have been identified by class teachers or the pastoral team, a discussion is carried out with student and parents to consider whether it is the right path for them. We don't get many who say no because they know things would not be working for them at school."

Q: "Would you know why pupils were on SA+ before they come to you on WBL?"

A: "(hesitates)...I cannot remember everybody but when they come through I get the information and I read through it but most of them seemed to have behavioural needs or emotional and behavioural needs."

Extract of interview with Work-based Learning Co-ordinator in mainstream school 2

For those with a Statement for SEBD in mainstream school 1, the alternative curriculum took the form of offsite courses within institutes and colleges that offered certificate and foundation courses with possible progression along NVQ levels. The SENCo would still oversee their needs. This was different from the “pure” WBL option. PM10 and PM11 were pupils in Year 9 and Year 11 respectively, who were encouraged to pursue their interest in the performing arts and were perceived to be able to gain qualifications within this route. Since these pupils had a Statement, the organisation of annual reviews and 6 weekly CAF reviews ensured some aspect of planning for their future. The interviews carried out within mainstream schools indicate that the SENCo may have not taken on this responsibility if these pupils with SEBD did not have a statement.

This evidence may suggest that a Statement for pupils with SEBD may provide a protective cloak when pupils reach Year 9, in the absence of specific structures of support at SA+ in Year 7 and 8.

7.2.5 Curriculum content and work experience: special schools

Getting special schools to discuss their curriculum content in relation to transition planning was a difficult task because it meant trying to shift their focus away from the review process and away from the role of external services. In terms of curriculum areas that are related to transition planning, both special schools mentioned PSHE lessons and work-related learning. Independent living was incorporated within work-related learning through specific programmes that were said to be carried out (e.g. ASDAN). Both schools also mentioned college links, where pupils followed practical tasks related to catering, horticulture, painting and decorating.

“We do the Click programme, which looks at where I am at now (the pupil), what is important for me, what jobs I may like to do, what skills I will need, things I am good at in school, things that I think I still need to do, where do I see myself in 3 years’ time basically. So we start that part of work-related topics”

Assistant head, Special School 2

“Key Stage 4 pupils at the moment are looking at...hmm...the sport and leisure industry. They looked at the work of an artist last term. Post-16 it is very much looking at this, focussing on their skills and their qualities.”

Assistant head, Special School 1

The information given about curriculum seemed to relate more to giving information about jobs and professions or helping pupils to identify qualities or skills they were already perceived to have, rather than focussing on how specific skills could be taught and developed, or how skills could be generalised across settings. One school did mention that they involved an external service to work with pupils on self-advocacy, but there was no evidence that school continued such work, or initiatives to show how these skills were built on, other than the mention of a student council.

Q: “What about lessons based on problem solving skills and self-determination - how to go about a particular situation or asserting one-self?”

A. Yes actually I’ve got a young lady coming in from an independent disability service who really believes in self-advocacy. She is just starting to coming in once a month for half an hour and those are the sort of issues she’s going to be talking through with the group, helping them to have a voice, giving them a voice to be able to speak for themselves.”

Assistant head, Special School 1

“Hmm...I think within the individual departments they will look at their own strategies and how they can promote the independence”

Assistant head, Special School 2

The limitations of the curriculum provide additional support to the questions raised (e.g. Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Halpern, 1994), about whether schools are meeting the challenge of providing a holistic co-ordinated education. These limitations could be associated with staff members possibly harbouring lower pupil expectations or with a lack of teacher confidence or competence to teach the necessary life skills (Benitez et al., 2009).

Some parents commented about the lack of focus on essential daily living skills. The parents of PS5 were particularly concerned that going out in the community was still difficult for their son because he still experienced difficulty learning and applying social norms related to the use of public toilets. The parents said that school seemed concerned about the impact this could have on PS5's access to community visits but did not appear to consider the teaching of social norms around public toilet use.

"I think that special schools should keep young people up to the age of 25 years and concentrate on independence skills, for example, how to use a washing machine, how to cook a meal and teaching them about personal hygiene."

Parent of PS5

The reduced opportunities available for work experience must also be considered in the case of special schools. For special schools, opportunities for work experience or apprenticeships appeared to be very limited. Special school 1 did not really consider this to be an option for their young people due to the severe and complex nature of their disabilities (e.g. PMLD). This would appear to reinforce Thomson and Ward's (1993) assertion that employment for people with severe difficulties is unlikely to be a realistic outcome. Special school 2 said they had a work-related theoretical focus within their curriculum and a work-place manager would oversee work-related learning, but the actual availability of work experience was also remote and often restricted to in-house opportunities. This school had pupils with a broader spectrum of needs (e.g. MLD, SLD and pupils with ASD). Data from this study continues to support Mitchell's (1999) and Beyer and Kaehne (2008) views about limited opportunities in special schools, and about pupils in special schools more likely to have lower adaptive behaviour skills.

"They have more routes and pathways in mainstream. We have routes and pathways coming through now but it is much more gradual for us. It has been more of a focus on social care and housing for us. There is no focus on work placements and supported work. This may change in the future."

Assistant head, Special School 2

“An apprenticeship would not be something that our students with PMLD would be able to undertake. We are very limited with opportunities for PMLD students anyway most colleges make no provision for them. So really what we would be doing for a PMLD student is looking at a care package.”

Assistant head, Special School 1

“They get to do work experience here in school. Not all students get to do an off-site work experience placement. This is an area where we are struggling. We struggle to find places who will take our youngsters so we have a very narrow band of opportunity.”

Assistant head, Special School 2

7.2.6 The transition plan: mainstream schools

Transition planning within schools and the annual review process is not an explicit, straightforward matter. With reference to the codes in Figure 7.2 (the conceptual map of transition planning: mainstream), transition planning post-Year 9 was characterised by ambiguity and indistinctness, because attention was largely given to the Statement review.

The actual development of a transition plan as a requirement is to say the least, patchy across schools. Mainstream school 1 was the only mainstream school to acknowledge a transition plan within the annual review process and the SENCo used the ‘Delivery Plan and Review’ form provided by the CAF to help identify a list of actions at the end of a review linked to desired outcomes. So the CAF was identified as a facilitator of transition planning and in the SENCo’s view, it generated a short-term form of an action plan. This school also found the CAF useful in achieving the multi-agency response it intended.

However, it is noted that the CAF is not specifically aimed to create a transition plan and the services involved in the CAF did not necessarily maintain a role in transition. In the case of PM 11 a young person with SEBD in Year 11, the CAMHS practitioner who attended his review mentioned limited staff, funding for the service and long waiting lists as barriers that would prevent CAMHS from providing a therapeutic service once PM 11 went to college. There was also no assurance that the CAF would continue to be maintained once the pupil left school, with who took over the CAF lead practitioner role from the SENCo, not known. Moreover, although Connexions were present at PM11’s review the PA did not demonstrate

an active role and there was no mention of the Section 139a document that would support his transition. This would support Cullen et al.'s (2009) finding that Section 139a completion was a variable practice for Connexions PAs in mainstream schools.

Within the other two mainstream schools, the SENCoS did not identify the development of a transition plan as a key, distinct aim. They restricted the annual review to the evaluation of statement objectives and teacher reports, and there was no mention of initiating a transition plan at Year 9. The analysis of interviews and case study information, particularly, the review observation schedules, showed no evidence of a transition plan within annual reviews held in mainstream schools, nor an intention to draw one up after reviews. This is consistent with the lack of plans found in previous studies (e.g. Heslop et al., 2002; Heslop & Abbott, 2008; Polat et al., 2001; Ward et al., 2003).

Since this is perceived to be a central gap of transition planning it requires further reflection within the context of RQ2. It was interesting to note that school may attribute the responsibility of producing a transition plan to the Connexions PA, but even in reviews attended by Connexions there was no mention of a distinct transition document. For example, in PM13's review there was no information given to parents about this, even though parents discussed long-term prospects and mentioned the possibility that the pupil would pursue higher education.

Q: Is there any attempt to have some form of a plan that includes a transition plan in the end of that? (With reference to the review process)

A: I personally do not think that there is...but again I might be doing the Connexions service an injustice there.

SENCo mainstream school 2

7.2.7 The transition plan: special schools

Special schools were more aware of transition planning as a requirement than mainstream schools. This may have been enhanced by the special schools having participated in the LA's pilot of PCRs. Degree of awareness may be changing at the time of writing, partly as a result of the LA trying to raise the profile of transition reviews, albeit only from the framework of PCRs more than from the wider transition planning agenda. By this is meant, that the mere

change in review format may not imply pupils' seamless transitions from school, although it could be an important variable.

The transition plan in schools took the form of an action plan that was developed at the final stage of the PCR process. The PCR culminated in a list of issues to be resolved and actions needed. The emphasis of the action plan centred on external service involvement, such as health services, social services, and Connexions, with particular tasks that were assigned to them. Table 7.1 is an example of actions agreed in the case of PS1, in Year 12 of special school 1. Facilitators of the PCRs also identified who would be responsible for an action and by when.

Action	Who by?	When?
Visits to be arranged to both local and residential colleges	Connexions PA	End of June
Social services to advise parents and make necessary referrals to explore activities outside school	Social Worker (Children's Social Services)	End of May
The use of Direct Payments	Social Services to guide parents through the process	End of May
For PS1 to gain confidence to use his electric wheelchair outside	Paediatric Physiotherapist to arrange for 1:1 sessions	End of May
Ensure referral/transition to Adult Care team	Social Worker (Children's Disability Team to make referral to Adult Team)	ASAP
Health Passport in place	Paediatric Physiotherapist	End of June
For PS1 to keep in touch with his friends	Social Services to advise parents	Ongoing
Help with PS1's communication aid	Physiotherapist will speak to Speech & Language Therapy	End of May

Table 7-1: Example transition action plan

The action plans produced were predominantly concerned with the roles of external services in transition. There was less focus on the role of the school and potential identification of pupil learning targets throughout the last years in special education. There was also limited consideration of the kind of courses that PS1 could pursue after he left school within a long-term view of the future. There are therefore, some reservations about the extent to which a series of short-term actions, that could be reviewed at or before the next year would represent a transition plan. Whether parents would feel that this provides

clear information about post-secondary opportunities and the support pupils may require is an important question that will be addressed later on in this chapter.

7.2.8 Future opportunities and post-secondary destinations considered

The difference between the aspirations of staff members in mainstream and special schools has already been mentioned. Special school staff had lower aspirations than mainstream staff. This factor is likely to be part of Mitchell's (1999) view about how type of school attended may determine the destination of a pupil.

"I am sure that in mainstream school students are looking very much at the educational side of things but for our students it may be supported living."

Assistant head, special school 1

The non-participant review observations were able to capture contexts within which future destinations were considered and how staff aspirations and fixed perceptions could influence probable destinations. Within mainstream reviews, destinations were more likely to be considered in Year 11 reviews than Year 9. The exception was for pupils who were already accessing some aspect of alternative curriculum, as in the case of PM10. PM10 was a pupil in Year 9 with a Statement for SEBD, who already accessed a performing arts programme 3 days a week and time was taken to discuss programme levels she could access in the future. College links were therefore a feature of this pupil's transition planning.

On the other hand, the review for PM9, a year 9 pupil with high functioning ASD did not include consideration of college links in the future. The SENCo had already encouraged links with the Aiming Higher co-ordinator (encouraging activities to promote Higher Education) and the only mention of Connexions was with a view to gain further information about Higher Education. Similarly, in a different mainstream school, PM12 was another pupil with high functioning ASD, where the SENCo did not indicate a need to involve the Connexions Service, even though during the parental interview, PM12's parent appeared anxious about her son's future employment prospects and imminent work experience in Year 10. This may imply less probability of discussing destinations earlier, for those pupils with a Statement who were on or about to start an 'academic pathway' and who did not display behaviour

difficulties that impacted on access to the academic curriculum. Moreover, this corresponds with the schools view of transition as a Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 matter.

This trend also suggests that mainstream schools may tend to be selective in transition planning processes and external service involvement across pupils, based on their perceptions and aspirations. Variable resource allocation can have implications both on high functioning ASD pupils who may need some form of social support but who are unlikely to get it, as well as on the destinations of pupils who manifest challenging behaviour for reasons other than being disaffected from the mainstream curriculum.

In special schools, the most likely destinations for pupils were college and/or care settings because most post-16 training opportunities were dependent on achievement of qualifications. College is possibly seen as a way of extending the learning opportunities of these pupils in the absence of training or work-related opportunities. This was more likely to be considered if pupils did not have severe LD or PMLD. Special schools claimed that apprenticeships and work opportunities, including supported employment were not available options for their young people and they had never had anyone pursue these.

“We are very limited with opportunities for PMLD students. Anyway most colleges make no provision for them. So really what we would be doing for a PMLD student is looking at a care package.”

Assistant head teacher Special School 1

Special schools thought that parents were often just grateful that there was something for their young people when they left school. Special school 1 thought that parents of pupils with PMLD were the least satisfied with the options available. Availability of options was therefore likely to be related to perceived pupil abilities or disabilities, with fewer opportunities available for pupils with more severe needs (McConkey & Smyth, 2002; Shah, 2005; Smart, 2004).

The Connexions PA interviewed also expressed views about limited opportunities:

“There are young people out there for whom the formal qualification structure is not going to work for them, certainly not in the short term and maybe not even in the long term. But because training is about both practical skills as well as the formal qualifications, the practical might work but that will be a limitation. If the provider is given financial reward based on the fact that someone has achieved an NVQ level 1 or NVQ level 2, then this is a barrier for someone to actually move on into training in an area if the person cannot achieve this”

Connexions PA, special school 2

Both interview and case study data show college to be the encouraged and probable destination within this study, with employment opportunities not mentioned as a choice (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Heslop et al., 2002; Kaehne & Beyer 2008). The data suggests that Connexions’ links with employment providers do not materialise in employment possibilities for young people with SEN and this contributes to promote the wider FE participation agenda. This study did not find schools attempting to link with employment agencies themselves.

“There is a tension. In terms of education and considering the transition from school to whatever it may be, education is more inclusive in approach and is able to provide support to a broad range of young people. When you start to look at training opportunities however, work-based training opportunities, then it becomes much narrower. There isn’t the level of support a young person may need within work-based learning. There certainly is no support within an employment situation either. So on the one hand you have education, college, which is predominantly what most young people will do - the vast majority of people, whether they have LDD or not will move into further education post-school.”

Connexions PA, special school 2

This study shows that in mainstream schools *perceived* cognitive ability of the pupil, staff aspirations and parental empowerment may be associated with the degree of pupil vulnerability at transition. The range of qualification levels and accreditation embedded within mainstream provision (e.g. BTEC) help to expand pupil’s educational opportunities. In the case of specific SEN groups, this study suggests that pupils with SEBD could be highly

vulnerable at transition and that a Statement could make these pupils more visible at transition, although this was not necessarily the case for pupils with high functioning ASD. This will require further discussion, since LAs may need to develop other ways of reducing pupils' vulnerability at transition.

In special schools, the severity of a pupil's disability and associated cognitive impairment, low staff aspirations and limited post-secondary opportunities available all interacted to present more challenges at transition. This implies a rather medical model view impacting on provision. The data within this study therefore support the default college placement (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Beyer & Kaehne, 2008; Kaehne and Beyer, 2008) and confirm why young people with cognitive and learning difficulties have less opportunities (Smart 2004) and are the most highly represented in NEET categories (Aston et al, 2006).

Q: So do you think pupils in special schools have more limited opportunities?

A: Very limited...I don't think I have had a pupil leave school and gone into full time work

Q: So could it be that a child in mainstream is better placed?

A: in terms of other opportunities yes, I do think they are extremely limited for our youngsters.

Assistant head teacher Special School 2

7.2.9 Pupil involvement

There is a rather inconsistent picture related to pupil involvement and what this means to school staff. The mainstream schools said they would try to get pupil views prior to reviews through their TA's who could then represent their views, whilst still acknowledging they could do this better.

"I always invite the student to the reviews, I would not hold one without them, if an agency didn't turn up...I would continue, but the child is the most important person. Some people think that it is inappropriate for them to be there, I disagree at secondary. I think that it is important that they know what is going on, unless of course it is a really obscure case where you need to have discussion without them."

SENCo, mainstream school 2

Overall the mainstream schools looked at pupil involvement from the angle of review attendance, which did not necessarily equate to active involvement. RQ2 addresses the major gaps identified. The best evidence of active involvement was perhaps that of PM13. The pupil was keen to be involved in his review and answered questions appropriately. For example, the SENCo asked the pupil, “what else do you think is a priority?”, “to just keep going” was his reply. The pupil had aspirations related to the creative arts (including radio, drama and TV), although these were expressed by his parents. Other cases studies indicated that pupils could end up being at the receiving end throughout a review.

In special schools, the PCR brought about more awareness about how schools could try to enhance pupil participation, showing responsiveness to consider pupil strengths and preferences (Kaehne and Beyer, 2009b; Mansell and Beadle-Brown 2004):

Q: “Would the student having a regular annual review be still involved in inviting people themselves for their review?”

A. “No, it is very much school who do that.”

Q. “Why wouldn’t that happen then?”

A. “It just was something we hadn’t thought of. We had our systems in place and it wasn’t something that students were a central part of even though the review was about them. It has changed our way at looking at things.”

Assistant head, special school 1

In preparing for a PCR, pupils had to be helped to complete a ‘my review booklet’. This was aimed to facilitate pupil participation. Peoples’ perception of the pupils’ expressive language ability was still linked to whether pupils would be encouraged to contribute throughout the review process and pupil participation was poor for those who had limited verbal ability. So for instance, PS8, a sociable and verbal pupil with DS, was more involved in his review than other pupils in special schools who weren’t as verbal.

7.2.10 Family involvement and parental satisfaction at transition

Data about family/parental involvement was coded according to mainstream and special schools. Figure 7.4 presents main codes relating to parental issues; the content of which will be discussed here.

As part of the pupil case studies, the non-participant review observations provided extensive data about parent/carers participation and the interactions between parents and other stakeholders. The parent interviews provided further insight into parents' experiences. Aspects that are linked to barriers or gaps which emerged from difficulties identified by parents will be considered in RQ2. Additional data from pupil case studies gave information relevant to review processes which will be pertinent to answering RQ3.

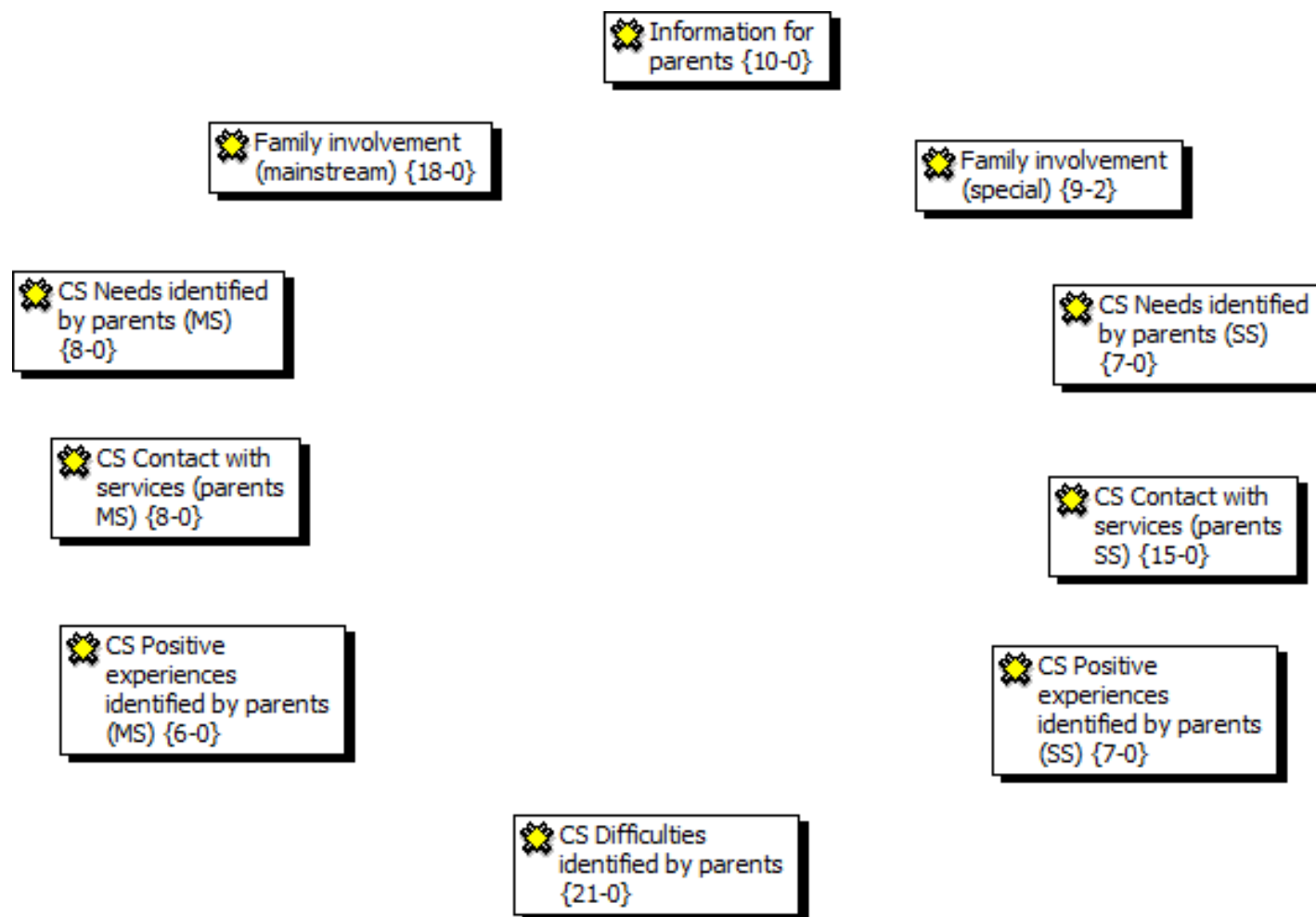


Figure 7-4: Main codes relating to parental issues in transition

For both mainstream and special schools, whole school annual events were the key ways in which schools sought to involve parents and carers. The options event was commonly cited in mainstream schools and the 'moving on' fair provided information to parents in special schools. This was organised via liaison between school, Connexions and national programmes like Aim Higher to provide information about post-secondary opportunities.

Other sources of information were available during individualised meetings that were needs-led, or the annual review. In mainstream schools, the SENCo emerges as the main source of information throughout pupil reviews and the gateway to accessing other services like Connexions. The pupil cases showed that access to information and parental participation in decision-making was enhanced if parents were proactive and competent in asking questions or presenting concerns. However, case study data also showed that information sharing was highly dependent on which services attended a pupil's review, particularly in the case of special schools. So for example, in the case of PS1, despite parents presenting as particularly assertive, they had questions that could not be answered because the social worker and the speech and language therapist were not present at the review. Other researchers have referred to the absence of relevant or statutory agencies resulting in significant levels of unmet need (e.g. Hudson, 2006; Sloper et al., 2010; Ward et al., 2003).

The parental interviews within the case studies provided data about:

- Pupil needs (Table 7.2)
- Pupil experiences (Table 7.3)
- Contact with services (Table 7.4)

Parents of pupils in mainstream school	Parents of pupils in special school
<p><i>“Flexibility with regard to options at Year 9 and consideration of pupil’s weaknesses due to ASD” [PM9]</i></p> <p><i>“To ensure that support will continue to be in place because he cannot do everything alone” [PM11]</i></p> <p><i>“Speech and language needs, particularly progress with his expressive skills and future career information from Connexions” [PM12]</i></p> <p><i>“Connexions, to know more about what services can be offered to our son” [PM13]</i></p>	<p><i>“More opportunities to develop self-help skills and more support for us parents in terms of care needs at home” [PS1]</i></p> <p><i>“More awareness about pupil’s vulnerability, and abilities; for example in aspects like relationships and having a girlfriend, risk assessments and clear information is needed” [PS3]</i></p> <p><i>“Being more part of what is happening and being involved in decisions about post school. I am worried about what the future holds for my son and the support he will have once he leaves school” [PS5]</i></p> <p><i>“We need to go and visit the various provisions. We hope the social worker from adult social care may support us” [PS7]</i></p>

Table 7-2: Pupil transition needs as identified by parents

Parents of pupils in mainstream school	Parents of pupils in special school
<p><i>“Academically he is doing well” [PM9]</i></p> <p><i>“The performing arts education” [PM10]</i></p> <p><i>“That he has established his own aims and goals” [PM11]</i></p> <p><i>“Good communication between school and parent to get to know how the pupil is getting on” [PM12]</i></p> <p><i>“Academically he is doing well” [PM12]</i></p> <p><i>“Overall the pupil takes a positive attitude to challenges and people are responding positively to him positively” [PM13]</i></p>	<p><i>“Pupil enjoys school and being with his friends and he has a good relationship with his teacher” [PS1]</i></p> <p><i>“School and respite” [PS2]</i></p> <p><i>“Support through Direct Payments – to take the pupil to football and an evening meal” [PS3]</i></p> <p><i>“Pupil is enjoying college. He enjoys dance and drama, painting and decorating” [PS5]</i></p> <p><i>“His health and he is happy” [PS7]</i></p> <p><i>“He is getting on well socially with other people. He has this opportunity at youth club.” [PS8]</i></p>

Table 7-3: Positive transition experiences identified by parents

Parents of pupils in mainstream school	Parents of pupils in special school
<p><i>"CAMHS to help with the pupil's anxiety" [PM9]</i></p> <p><i>"the pupil is involved with Aim Higher although I have not met with anyone in relation to this and there is limited information for now about the role of Aim Higher" [PM9]</i></p> <p><i>"I have had meetings in school to discuss the performing arts programme and the family support worker visits regularly or phones me. I did not know the Connexions advisor" [PM10]</i></p> <p><i>"The school are available most times. Connexions take the pupil out and he needs to go to CAMHS to talk to the psychiatrist" [PM11]</i></p> <p><i>"There is no contact with services" [PM12]</i></p> <p><i>"No professionals are involved currently, only the SENCo" [PM13]</i></p>	<p><i>"The Social worker - once about 2 weeks ago; prior to this visit there was no contact unless we try to get in touch" [PS1]</i></p> <p><i>"The pupil's social worker because of respite and physiotherapy at school" [PS2]</i></p> <p><i>"Case manager and OT from an external company of health professionals that supports people with acquired brain injury" [PS3]</i></p> <p><i>"Two major ones - the children's social worker and the respite staff - but these were not present at the review and they have known my child a long time" [PS5]</i></p> <p><i>"We were told we did not have a social worker in place because she left" [PS7]</i></p> <p><i>"No one, we saw Connexions at the last review" [PS7]</i></p> <p><i>"I just cannot get in touch with the social worker and I have given up. Last year the social worker attended the review organised by respite" [PS8]</i></p>

Table 7-4: Parental contact with services involved in transition

Parents were keen to ensure an individualised approach for the young person, according to their various needs. Parents seemed to want more partnership with other stakeholders, in terms of information and decision-making. For all parents there was some element of anxiety about change or lack of information. For those parents of pupils in Year 9 in mainstream schools, this related to how option choice could impact on future career prospects. For parents of pupils in mainstream Year 11 or about to leave special school the anxiety centred on the future availability of systems of support and quality of service

provision. It is reasonable to imagine that parents had to deal with losing the stability of the secondary school routine that had developed over the years. The need to help families emotionally at transition, as suggested by Townsley (2004) is valid here.

It is perhaps no surprise that the quality and quantity of contact with services emerges as a key feature that will determine the nature of transitions. This study identifies access to CAMHS for mainstream pupils and access to a social worker for pupils in special schools as important, but fraught with problems. These difficult transactions with services can lead to heightened stress for families (McConkey and Smyth, 2003, Sloper et al., 2010).

7.2.11 Community level: External services

External service involvement for mainstream schools centred on Connexions, health (e.g. school nurse, SALT and CAMHS) and the Aim Higher co-ordinator. Professionals from within the LA (e.g. family support worker, educational psychologist) could also be involved, although it is essential to clarify that these were not necessarily or explicitly involved in terms of transition planning post-16. Mainstream schools found involvement of a youth support and family intervention team particularly useful if there were issues around youth offending and family housing. As mentioned earlier, Connexions were the main external agency cited as having responsibility around transition, although their knowledge about SEN was sometimes questioned by schools and their involvement with pupils at SA+ was variable.

“They (Connexions) would focus on the children who have the Statement of SEN but if there were any other youngsters who we felt would benefit from their input then they could be directed. But I suppose that it is a capacity issue for Connexions, as with other services really”

SENCo, mainstream school 1

The case study data reflected a varied picture of external service involvement. Observation of pupil reviews showed that mainstream schools may not always seek to involve external services. This may reflect a need to rationalise the relatively limited resources available to schools. Within the case studies, it was interesting to note that the two pupils with high

functioning ASD in mainstream schools 1 and 3 had no external service involvement at Year 9. This continues to add support to the reduced resource allocation for adolescents with high functioning ASD (Department of Health 2010a; Department of Health 2010b; Sloper et al., 2010). In other cases, particularly if medical or behavioural issues were present, SENCos were more likely to seek to involve external services.

Although external service involvement may depend on perceived pupil needs, this on its own did not guarantee their input. The overall difficulties with gaining service involvement included capacity of services or continuity of service input once initiated. The sharing of information across external services and schools was also identified as a problem. The study shows that the responsibilities of services and agencies to young people between the age of 14 and 19 are significantly blurred, an aspect that the Green Paper (2011) may have got a glimpse of, although there is no clear outline of how this can be tackled.

“There is just not enough staff, like CAMHS for example. We get very little feedback in terms of strategies and things you know. We do the referral for the children because we are seriously worried about them and their mental health and we get nothing back after the referral is done.”

SENCo, mainstream school 2

“...often when a social worker has been involved with a case it is around an assessment, an initial assessment and then that social worker moves on and sometimes the outcome it isn't fed back”

SENCo, mainstream school 1

The involvement of CAMHS and of social services emerges as the most challenging, because of limited resources that could be targeted to other priorities. Requests for social service involvements from mainstream schools tended to be unsuccessful if they were not of a child protection nature. Access to social services and adult social care was also problematic in the real world of transition planning within special schools, and the PCR was seen as the forum that could help a pupil have access to these services. The pupil case studies also indicated that lack of access and dissatisfaction extended to health services, namely, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy. These difficulties continue the debate around

participation and co-ordination of services (Heslop et al., 2002; Kaehne 2011; Kaehne & Beyer, 2009a; Ward et al., 2003) and will be considered further in RQ2.

“We have had some young people who didn’t ever see a social worker right up to the last day they left school, even though they were known to social services for many years, so they left school with no plan in place”

Assistant head, special school 2

The adult social care team were predominantly concerned with pupils with severe and complex learning disabilities and health needs in special schools. Transition work was being addressed by the role of a transition social worker.

“My role as transition worker is shared between the children and adult service team. They [the pupils] still have a child social worker at the moment and I kind of work in the background really, so I attend as many school reviews, core group meetings, any kind of meeting that is going on for the child and introduce myself, basically in preparation for coming into adult services.”

Transition social worker

This role was being developed at the time of this study and there was one designated post for the LA. Involvement of the transition social worker was mostly reliant on pupils being referred from the children’s disability team or Connexions. With networking across schools and agencies described as informal, there was recognition that the role could be less known to schools and other services. Pupils could also slip through the net if they never had any contact with the children’s disability team.

Q: “What do you mean by intervention?”

A: Identifying services really and where the needs are and linking with other professionals so that the young people are on a pathway post-school”

Transition social worker

The role of the transition social worker seemed to be designed to fill in the 16 to 18 delivery gap, to initiate a social care assessment that aimed to identify the type of provision a young person will require in the future. This assessment would then inform a support plan when

the young person accessed adult services. The transition social worker viewed the PCR as a useful medium that helped to achieve information for the social care team or as a forum to initiate a referral to the team.

7.2.12 External Services: The role of the Connexions PA

The codes that were identified within this study included the roles of Connexions as perceived by mainstream schools, as perceived by special schools and as perceived by PAs themselves (see Figure 7.5).

The dilemma of the universal vs. specialist Connexions role outlined by Hoggarth and Smith (2004) emerges also within this study, in that, Connexions PAs who completed the professional questionnaire within the mainstream case studies highlighted their universal role, whereas the Connexions PA who participated within the main semi-structured interview and who worked with pupils with SEN in a special school, emphasised the specialist work.

“I have a caseload of pupils from Years 9 to 13. Preparation work happens in Year 9 and 10. In Year 11, I provide guidance (vocational) and provide access to opportunities in education, employment and training, by providing information and advice on the above. In Year 12 and 13, I provide information, advice and guidance on Higher Education and other Level 4 qualifications and opportunities.”

Connexions PA, mainstream school 1

“I think Connexions work has picked up and recognised those young people who are at the edge of the education system. These young people may not have engaged with advisors but now we have to make sure that they do. Connexions have targets to make sure that we are reaching these young people.”

Connexions PA, special school 2

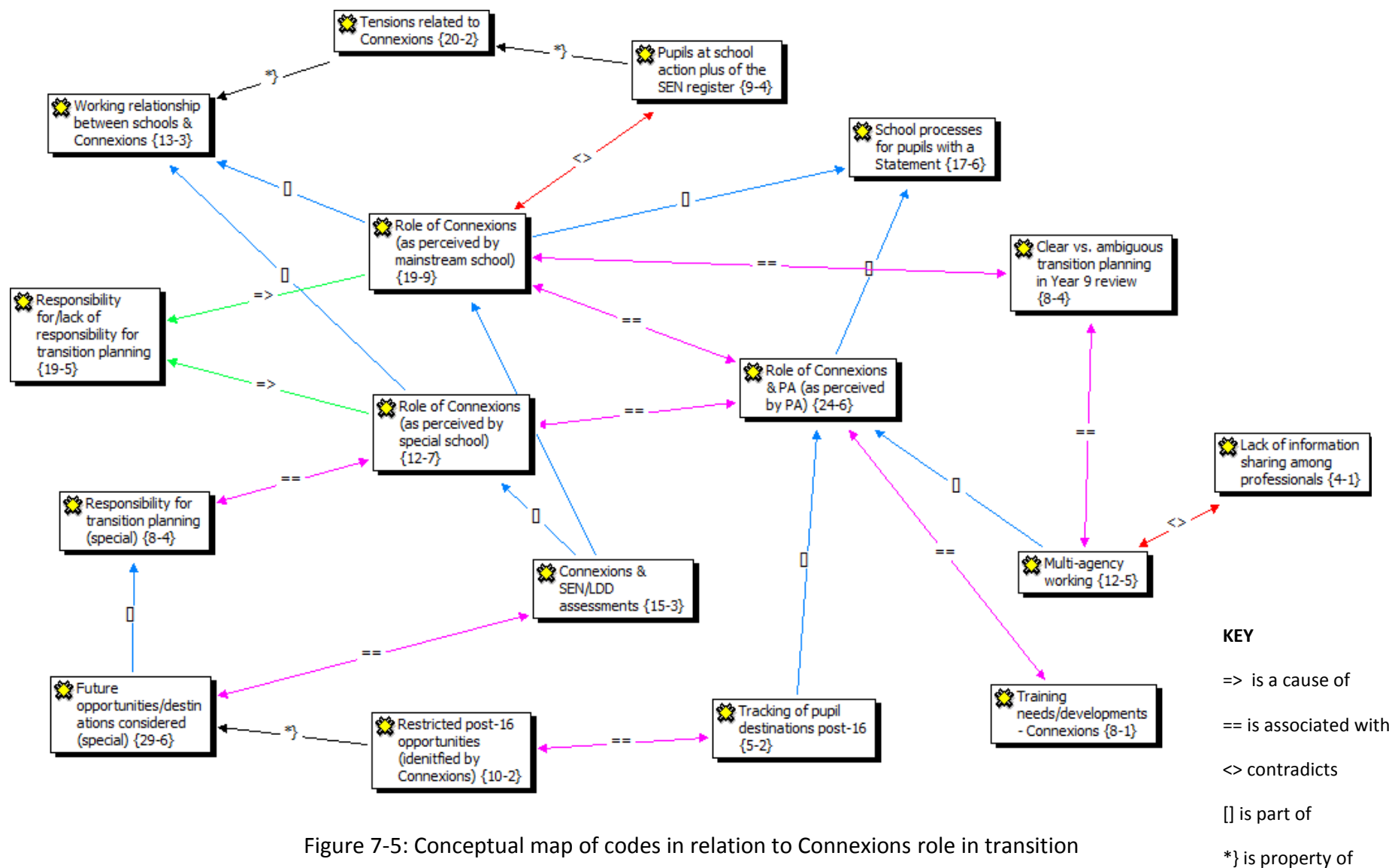


Figure 7-5: Conceptual map of codes in relation to Connexions role in transition

The role of Connexions seemed more straightforward within special schools. This may be due to two main features; the statutory role assigned to them in supporting pupils with a Statement, which also helped to outline their relationship with special schools, and within this particular study, the fact that the two Connexions advisors working in special schools 1 and 2 had been trained facilitators of PCRs.

In mainstream schools, the review observations indicated that the nature of their work was dependent on their relationship with the school. The data suggests the relationship between mainstream schools and Connexions was best represented by model 2 in Hoggarth and Smith's (2004) model of working arrangements. This means that Connexions were a relatively neutral agency, with schools in control of which pupils were referred to the service. Presence at pupil reviews was often dependent on an invite from the SENCo. Connexions PAs also identified the SENCo as their liaison person within mainstream school, and they relied on information given by the SENCo to identify pupils with LDD who would benefit from their support.

Eventually the information available is used to develop the Section 139a, the document that presents information about assessments and recommendations to support the young person in their transition from school to FE or work-based learning. The PA interviewed claimed to find EP's reports useful to compile the detail required in this document. The Section 139a is currently being commissioned by the LA for pupils with a Statement of SEN and *possibly* to others at SA+. The word *possibly* is of critical significance here, because in reality there is only duty to compile Section 139a for pupils with Statements. This study has indicated that those at SA+ with a clear diagnosis may have this document compiled, but this may vary according to different Connexions PA and their capacity, priorities of the SENCo and the accessibility of information. In view of the current austerity measures, the reduced availability of Connexions workers is likely to impact on pupils who have no Statement.

Past research (e.g. Abbott and Heslop, 2009; Cullen et al., 2009) has shown limited effectiveness of the Connexions service in helping young people with SEN. This study showed that despite some tensions related to Connexions, which will be discussed further in

the next RQ, schools were relatively positive about the role of Connexions in transition compared to the parents of pupils with SEN.

The discussion of the aspects of transition found within the real world of schools show similarities as well as differences between mainstream and special schools. School, family, pupil, and community components for transition planning are complex.

7.3 RQ2: What accounts for any underlying barriers to, or gaps in, transition work?

This section aspires to identify and clarify the barriers to, or gaps in transition work with reference to the codes derived from the data. Table 7.5 summarises the main barriers and gaps identified. These correspond to the codes that have emerged from the data and serve to guide the reader to the various sections involved in discussing RQ2. This section of Chapter 7 also aims to link the barriers or gaps with other outcomes already mentioned, such as the different perceptions of transition that emerged from RQ1. RQ2 also includes the barriers and gaps that have been identified by the parents participating in this study.

Mainstream Schools	Special Schools
<p>Invisible transition: Ambiguous transition planning processes for pupils with a Statement and pupils at SA+</p> <p>Lack transition plan within Year 9 review: No distinct transition document despite Code of Practice guidance.</p>	<p>Visible but blurred transition: Transition planning processes linked predominantly to external service involvement and PCRs</p>
<p>Responsibility for/lack of responsibility for transition planning: SENCo not having the time to ensure that actions are followed through; Year 6 to 7 transition focus. Connexions seen to be responsible.</p>	<p>Responsibility for/lack of responsibility for transition planning: Assistant heads' responsibility for organising reviews does not guarantee responsibility to oversee action plan, particularly in the light of the role of the facilitator and action chaser in PCRs.</p>
<p>Tensions related to Connexions: Connexions have limited specialist knowledge and skills in relation to some additional needs, particularly ASD</p>	<p>Tensions related to the delivery of PCRs: Focus on the structural aspects of reviews; the production of an action plan vs. a transition plan and difficulties with implementation of actions.</p>
<p>Tensions related to Connexions: Connexions do not have the capacity to get involved with pupils with significant SEN who do not have a Statement</p>	<p>Tensions related to services: Lack of follow through of actions; difficulties with maintaining involvement from Social Services and limited therapeutic support from health services at transition.</p>
<p>Confusion between transition planning and Statement objectives: Unclear documentation provided by the LA – Confusion between the transition plan and the statement objectives and no differentiation between documentation for mainstream and that for special schools</p>	<p>Lack of focus on educational objectives, including skill development: transition-focussed education an unknown quantity.</p>
<p>Limitations in pupil involvement: difficulties related to involvement prior and during reviews</p>	<p>Limitations in pupil involvement: difficulties related to adaptation and use of visual resources to enable pupil involvement</p>
<p>Limitations related to family involvement</p>	<p>Limitations related to family involvement</p>
<p>Difficulties with external service involvement: Lack of external service</p>	<p>Difficulties with external service involvement: Lack of attendance at reviews</p>

attendance in pupil reviews – may be related to service capacity; more support required from services like CAMHS; lack of information sharing; lack of reliable professional assessments	and major difficulties with involvement from Children’s Social Services and Adult Social Care; lack of information sharing; lack of reliable professional assessments
Barriers & gaps identified by parents : Lack of clarity about post-school destinations and information about opportunities; lack of external service involvement; poor quality of therapeutic services; vague notion of career development for young people with SEN	

Table 7-5: Barriers and gaps in transition practice in mainstream and special schools

7.3.1 The invisible transition: a mainstream issue

Transition planning for post-16 for pupils with SEN was not really perceived as a priority in mainstream secondary schools, particularly in the light of other competing agendas. The attributed meaning of transition may be perceived to contribute to this diminishing priority. In mainstream schools, Years 10 and 11 appear to be perceived as a 2 year course following option choice and consideration about post-16 was more likely to happen in Year 11, with Connexions as the responsible agents of post-16 planning. The Year 6 to 7 pupil transitions took precedence. This was reflected in two main organisational features – lack of reference to transition in school’s documentation (e.g. only reference to transition in the context of Year 6 to 7 when school had an inclusion policy) and the school’s staff structure, namely the existence and recognition of a transition co-ordinator role only for Year 7.

“We have an inclusion policy, whether it includes transition, because we’ve got that many policies...whether it involves transition I don’t know. I think it does, especially, I think transition between Year 6 to Year 7 that is from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. But whether to post-16 I don’t know.”

SENCo, mainstream school 3

The data suggests that various staff members could have a joint element of ‘invisible shared responsibility’, although the SENCo still had delegated responsibility from the head teacher for pupils with a Statement of SEN. The analysis indicates that after Year 9, for pupils with a Statement and particularly for those at SA+, transition planning is a rather patchy concept and practice. This is an ongoing area for discussion throughout this chapter. Some key reflections linked to these findings, besides the fact that SENCos had a short-term view of transition, includes the likelihood that schools attribute responsibility and ownership of pupils to the receiving setting. So, if secondary schools tend to take more responsibility for the primary to secondary transition (although it is usually argued that this is a shared responsibility between primary and secondary school), then the post-16 destination could be perceived to be the setting that is required to take on responsibility for post-secondary transition. This scenario gets complicated because of the variability of post-secondary settings. However, the existence of external roles like Connexions, who can work with post-secondary settings, also facilitates the handing over of responsibility. In essence, direct links

and liaisons between school staff and employment agencies were conspicuously absent from both interview and case study data.

Considering that transition planning within mainstream schools was synonymous with choosing options at Year 9, one of the gaps already identified in the real world was lack of specific support when it came to making subject choice. The mainstream case studies also found that although pupils with a Statement had more chance of discussing aspects to do with option choice at their review, this tended to be dependent on parental knowledge and skill. Linking option choice within a long-term view of the future was not explicit in the annual reviews observed. Schools can find it hard to shift from the task of Statement objectives (Dee, 2006) and this narrow outlook can promote the invisible transition.

There was also lack of clarity about the way in which externally organised initiatives operated, suggesting a problem with how government initiatives and programmes that emanate from policy are communicated to schools. SENCoS in mainstream schools were varied in the information they held. This information could then enable them to link external roles with internal processes to aid transition-related work for pupils with SEN. The Aiming High programme was a key example, with one SENCo having more knowledge than the other two interviewed.

Q. "So did anyone inform you about this Aiming Higher initiative?"

A: "No I didn't get any information. It is a new woman that is here really, so it was more about Aim Higher is here and they will help children who are underachieving, just basically to help them prepare for anything else they want to do. I don't know how she came to be based in the school, I know she worked with a cohort of students from different year groups about Aim Higher and the plan is to move pupils on to university"

SENCo, mainstream school 3

For those pupils who pursue the WBL option, there is the risk that these start to disappear from school attention after Year 9 because they are offsite for most of the time. What becomes of their IEPs? How does SA+ support take form? The data indicates that other staff members from the senior management team, other than the SENCo may be involved in the process of options decision-making for pupils on SA+ with behaviour difficulties, although

further investigation about the basis for, or criteria linked to this decision, is warranted. Transition planning for these pupils was then likely to depend on the hard work of the WBL co-ordinator but clear systems for this were lacking. This outcome provides support to Yates et al.'s (2011) view of how risk of NEET and unequal transition experiences can be linked to structural inequalities. Pupils with SEBD could therefore be at higher risk of invisibility at transition.

7.3.2 The transition that is visible but blurred: a special school issue

The transition that is visible but blurred is seen as a useful phrase to describe transition planning in special schools. By this is meant that although there was more recognition of transition planning than in mainstream schools, the preoccupation with external service involvement and service transitions tends to cloud over the bigger picture of transition planning.

Although there were tensions related to the way in which the PCRs were introduced to the special schools, the assistant heads viewed PCRs as the new gateway to get pupils access to services deemed necessary.

“Essentially what I am gathering from people is that there is a gap getting services alerted to what these young people are going to need when they leave school. Complexity of need and complexity of disability sometimes meant that our young people were not getting the full entitlement of services when they leave school.”

Assistant head, special school 2

Special schools provided more enhanced understanding about the association between the process of transition planning and the development of an action plan that could be reviewed periodically, when compared to mainstream schools. However, there was ambiguity around the existence of a pupil transition plan as a distinct document that would eventually be produced, revisited and revised. The format of the PCR facilitated the creation of an action plan for service action, but whether this in itself can constitute a “pupil transition plan” is debatable.

“It would be housing, health, any actions that affect the young person particularly what they need; they may need access to a new social worker so it would be on their action plan. From the school’s point of view it would just be to maintain their educational placement here. There wouldn’t be much in terms of our...it would be Year 13 where we would be saying that we need to make sure...it is more about other agencies than education, because we know the routes that most of our youngsters are going to take.”

Assistant head, special school 2 talking about the action plan

Moreover, there was concern that the list of actions that emerged from a PCR would not necessarily be monitored and met till the next review which would take place a year later. This was mediated by further tension related to facilitator turnover and who, ultimately, would be responsible to ensure the actions were met and reviewed, a question that is also pertinent to RQ3.

The transition that is visible but blurred is a concept that emerged from the failure to be clear about the futures of young people, a key outcome from parental interviews within pupil case studies. The six special school pupil case studies revealed a very important aspect in terms of future destinations. Although destination type was considered, their content may not be. So although college may be considered as the most likely route post-19, there was limited discussion about the types of colleges available, what to consider throughout potential visits with Connexions, and what courses were being offered. What the young person could be helped to achieve, along with information regarding progression after college was also lacking. The blurred transition was evident in quotes from post-review parent interviews:

“We still don’t know what he is going to be doing after he leaves school.”

Parent PS1 six months after review

“None of the actions have happened. Connexions haven’t got in touch...I hope they can get involved next year. I’m not sure about college prospects...I also think that the activities at day care centres may not be tailor made for his age since the people using the day care centre are aged between 18 to 85 years.”

Parent PS2 six months after review

“Brochures and information is mainly geared towards mainstream choices and these are not always suitable for young people with SEN. I think information should be more detailed outlining exactly how many days a young person could attend an option and what they would be doing in these courses.”

Parent PS5 eight months after review

“He (pupil) has been visiting colleges that offer sports coaching, but think this has been unsuccessful because they were too far away to be accessed and the courses were within a mixed ability group so there were non SEN pupils there.”

Parent PS3 6 months after review

These findings mirror those of earlier researchers, about lack of information (Tarleton and Ward, 2005, Townsley, 2004, Smart, 2004) and lack of post-secondary options (Abbott and Heslop, 2009, Kaehne and Beyer, 2008). Even if college was mentioned as the default destination there was limited detail about which courses were suitable and why. Consequently, although this information may be seen to be an important feature of a transition plan, it was not usually included in action plans. This suggests that action plans should not be referred to as transition plans. It also suggests that Kaehne and Beyer’s (2009b) assertion about college being a smoother destination to organise strategically is true.

The case of PS8, a pupil with DS was a particularly interesting one because his mother presented as an assertive parent who posed a lot of questions throughout the review that were not fully answered. Although PS8 was seen to be a pupil who could ultimately benefit from some form of supported employment in the future, his mother thought there was lack of clarity around how this decision would ultimately be taken and what it would depend on.

The mother of PS3 was concerned about which courses her son would ultimately be able to pursue and where. She also seemed to indicate that there was restricted choice of courses.

“Because he has already done a lot of the same courses, such as painting and decorating...in reality things are different. Employment opportunities in the future are not clear.”

Parent PS3

When the carers of another pupil, PS7 were presented with the possibility of a college course by the Connexions advisor, the carers asked questions about both skills of staff and the duration of the college course. When the Connexions PA said the course would be for two years, the carers said this was not enough and that they wanted to look at places that offered longer-term specialist provision. This case also suggested that Connexions had limited information about whether the support systems within college were appropriate for PS7's needs, questioning the Connexions PA's knowledge about non-verbal pupils with ASD.

The argument presented here is that external service involvement is, by all means, a necessary ingredient, but it is not deemed to be sufficient. It may even play a role in alienating school staff from focussing on educational objectives that could link in to the nature of future destinations to be considered. This is an argument that will be revisited.

7.3.3 Lack of an individual transition plan: mainstream schools

One of the main overall outcomes of this study is that despite the Code of Practice stating that every young person with a statement of SEN should have a transition plan, none of the Year 9 annual reviews observed incorporated a discussion or compilation of a distinct transition plan. In the interviews that preceded the case studies, SENCos also struggled with the concept of a pupil transition plan. This outcome supports findings within key research focussed on transition plans (e.g. Abbott & Heslop 2009; Heslop et al., 2002; Thompson et al., 2000; Ward et al., 2003). Hence, school's responsibility and co-ordination of the annual review process does not imply co-ordination and responsibility for transition planning. Schools appeared to associate this with the lack of clarity in paperwork devolved by the LA and a predominant focus on Statement educational objectives. In view of the government's plan to enhance schools' independence of LAs, this has implications on whether schools would create processes and make appropriate external links that could lead to tangible transition plans for pupils, and the way in which they would do this if they did.

One mainstream school produced a form of action plan by utilising the CAF, but this has not been designed to specifically address transition planning. Hence although the annual review was identified as a forum for discussions around options, this did not happen within a long-term future outlook. So although having a Statement may appear to promote transition

planning according to guidance documents, explicit reference to and compilation of a transition plan is still not ascertained. A Statement only promotes some element of transition planning because it is more likely to involve Connexions.

This study shows that the absence of a transition plan was attributed to gaps within the LA's Year 9 annual review paperwork, with SENCos saying there was nothing different in the forms provided at Year 9 that was specifically linked to transition planning. The mention of a plan is also more likely to happen if Connexions are present at the pupil's reviews. The case studies shed more light on this association.

"As a careers guidance professional based within the educational environment, I meet with individual young people to discuss career ideas and aspirations. I devise a plan of action to ensure successful transition into a positive outcome, followed by regular tracking and monitoring of the young person post-compulsory secondary education."

Connexions PA, mainstream school 3

The Connexions PA in mainstream school 3 attended the review of PM13 but did not attend that of PM12. As a result, PM 13 who was a pupil with moderate learning difficulties had already met up with the PA whereas PM12, a high functioning pupil with ASD, had not. This means that although both pupils had Statements of SEN, the school gave differential access of pupils to the service. It later transpired from the parental interviews, that PM12's mother was concerned about the pupil's 2 week work experience in Year 10 and about his future employment opportunities.

7.3.4 Responsibility for/Lack of responsibility for transition planning

One of the barriers identified in the mainstream data is the lack of clear ownership or responsibility for transition to post-16 as an area in its own right. This took two forms; the lack of clarity in the roles of school staff and the perception that this was a Connexions matter. In relation to the first point, the responsibility for pupils with SEN appears to depend on the option pathways pursued and whether they have a Statement in Year 9. If pupils do not have a Statement people other than the SENCo within school, such as progress leaders, head of year or work-based learning co-ordinators, may take on transition planning

responsibilities. Nevertheless, these responsibilities did not explicitly include transition planning duties and there were inconsistencies about perceived roles within mainstream schools. So ultimately, a person's active awareness of responsibility for pupils' transition planning within option pathways is not ascertained.

Time and capacity was often cited as a block to mainstream SENCos' role with all pupils on the SEN register, with SENCos tending to prioritise work around Year 6 to 7 transitions first, if there wasn't an appointed co-ordinator who was specifically responsible for this. The SENCo's information about offsite courses that pupils with SEN were pursuing after Year 9 was variable across mainstream schools. This is identified as a major gap and furthermore highlights the predicament of pupils at SA+, particularly if these do not have multi-agency involvement that may be brought together via another established system like the CAF. In one mainstream school there were 30 pupils on WBL and only one had a CAF (where the SENCo had clearer responsibility).

The analysis also makes apparent the reality that although SENCos may be responsible for the technical and organisational aspects laid out for a transition review for pupils with a Statement, this does not mean responsibility for developing, monitoring and reviewing a pupil's transition plan. The co-ordination of transition planning has been shown to be a patchy area (Heslop & Abbott, 2008; Kaehne & O'Connell, 2010). This also emerged in the special schools within this study; although the assistant heads identified themselves as responsible to organise transition meetings or processes such as the PCR, they did not necessarily identify themselves as being the people who would necessarily draw up, monitor or review a pupil's action plan. So there is a lack of consistency when it comes to roles and responsibilities across pupil cases. Similar to mainstream schools, they were more likely to mention other services like Connexions or college representative as responsible for the transition of a pupil.

"Oh gosh...I suppose I am the liaison person. I make sure that everybody is there at the right time, know what they are doing and make sure that things get done really. So I work with Connexions, I work with the social work team. I would work with yourself if I needed you there. I liaise with the parents, and anyone else who is going to be at that review. I make sure that they are there."

Assistant head, special school 1

Q: "And who is responsible for reviewing the transition plan?"

A: "At the transition review you actually name someone who is going to be the person who will check. Now (laughs)...we will wait and see how successful that has been. I was named for one of the students, but it could be their social worker, it could be their connexions worker. The jury is still out on that."

Q: "So there is nothing set in stone. The key person who is nominated as responsible for that plan can vary from one child to another"

A. "They can, yes"

Assistant head, special school 1

Special school teachers participating in PCRs were also less likely to volunteer to oversee actions. In the case of PS8, a pupil with DS mentioned earlier, school appeared reluctant to take on responsibility for aspects of independence training. When the possibility of teaching the pupil the use of transport was mentioned, the school said that they could only do this within a group in school. When the action plan was drawn up by the school this action point was left out. The school seemed more willing to take on responsibility for more straightforward tasks, such as liaising with the school nurse to refer the pupil to a dietician to monitor his weight.

Reflecting on the observation of all six reviews carried out in special schools, it is noted that in more complex cases people may be less willing to volunteer to take the responsibility to help parents link up with social services. School in particular did not seem to think this was their responsibility and this may be the reason why some pupils could get to Year 12 or 13 without their parents knowing they may need a social worker and why. This may match the finding from the interviews carried out in special schools, where although the availability of a transition lead or key worker was identified as a need, this role was seen to be one which should be taken on by the local authority rather than by a member of staff within the school.

7.3.5 Tensions related to Connexions and related implications

Although Connexions were attributed a central role in transition work, there were several tensions that emerged in this study, particularly in relation to mainstream schools, some of which have already emerged in this discussion.

A main bone of contention relates to the variable degree of Connexions involvement according to whether a pupil has a Statement or is at SA+ of the SEN register. As things stand, pupils at SA+ may only receive a universal service. Even if Connexions may work with some pupils at SA+, it would be at the discretion of the school to use the Connexions resource. This is perhaps no different from how a school may decide to involve the Educational Psychology Service at SA+. Moreover, there is currently no duty to develop Section 139a documents for pupils at SA+, suggesting that there will be pupils who could benefit from their involvement and their link documents to provide some continuity between secondary school and post-secondary settings, but who are unlikely to receive it. From this perspective, a Statement of SEN can be viewed to have the potential to provide a safeguarding mechanism that enhances pupil visibility, service accessibility and possibly some element of continuity, since the Section 139a is viewed as the extension of a Statement after age 16 or 19.

The data derived from the Connexions service has indicated variability amongst schools' understanding of SA+, with pupils often being on the SEN register without clarity around the reason why. It also suggests that availability and specificity of information in writing (e.g. updated IEPs, professional reports) is doubtful and risks being contained within the school. This leaves external services like Connexions, at the mercy of the school in terms of obtaining helpful information that can contribute to a pupil's post-school transition and adjustment.

“But hmm...I think the difficulty that we have is with advisors going into school and not knowing where to draw the line. It is that School Action Plus cohort, some schools will say they are a bit iffy with their Maths and English or there is this particular issue, but there is nothing really to tie it down. Where we can get some clear diagnosis, like this young person has moderate learning difficulties for these areas...so if we have this information it would be good.”

“Yes there are some experienced SENCos around, but then it does not always necessarily translate into having a lot of information around. They don’t necessarily follow hand in hand either. There was one mainstream secondary school that did not have a SENCo for a while... There is quite a mixed bag and the Annual Review information is not necessarily good information that comes through either. It could be fairly light information, if at all sometimes.”

Connexions PA

The inconsistency related to pupil information provided has the potential to question the timely update of records related to quality of support provided for pupils with SEN at Key Stage 4. According to Hoggarth and Smith’s (2004) model of working arrangements, mainstream schools can operate a high level of control over what pupil information to give (model 3). This kind of working relationship also suggests some degree of vagueness about whether schools are actually in a position whereby they could act as direct, reliable links to post-secondary settings and providers, in the absence of a service like Connexions. In the first instance, schools may not even deem it to be their responsibility to act as direct links to post-secondary settings unless a designated staff member is specifically appointed to carry out this role. Currently, schools are not really made accountable to pupils’ outcomes post-secondary and this may also contribute to reduced information sharing from secondary schools and truncated support in post-secondary settings.

Restricted work prospects and college as the most likely destination encouraged by Connexions was already considered. This appeared to be supported for pupils in special schools, even by other services:

Q: "So is there a natural progression for a pupil from a special school to college?"

A: "There is and it is usually the Connexions worker who does the majority of that work"

Transition Social Worker

The Connexions PA interviewed emphasised this narrow opportunity structure for young people with SEN and a lack of co-ordination between education, training and employment (Heinz, 2009,), which became more constrained in the current stagnant economic circumstances. This was viewed as a tension for Connexions and could explain the reason why college tends to be the preferred or default destination. When post-16 training providers seek qualifications besides practical skill, this puts young people with SEN at a disadvantage. The Connexions PA stressed on the lack of support available out of education. This provided more of a real world reason for supporting college entry, because education is perceived to adopt a more inclusive approach than other strata in society.

"There are some young people who have significant barriers because of some long-term medical condition. So people can get hung up on that. I think what is difficult and challenging is the opportunity structure that is out there to support young people. The problem where people get more caught up on is that we've got this range of opportunities which is only capable of supporting a narrow range of young people. There is less flexibility to support the much wider range of young people."

Connexions PA

The WBL pathway in mainstream schools can include links with external employment agencies. However, data shows that even within this pathway, vocational college courses were likely to be the next step for pupils and gaining employment was an unlikely outcome.

“It is very rare that they go into employment...I have got 3 students who have been offered placements from the providers over 2 years. One is a programme-led apprenticeship which means that it would be a programme led by the provider and the student. So it is not like a Level 1, 2 or 3 but just a programme-led apprenticeship. Then there is another one who is going to be a classroom assistant because he is very hands-on and is helpful to other students...He will explain things and show others how to do things. The tutor and the provider have picked up on this and have offered him a placement working with other students in September.”

WBL Co-ordinator, mainstream school 2

The data within this study indicates that work settings and employers do not always provide the support mechanisms that could help young people participate within employment opportunities. This is possibly not just because of a lack of understanding about young peoples’ needs but also because of a lack of incentives and support given to providers that would allow them to be more flexible. It therefore means that the development of support mechanisms within post-16 training settings needs to accompany the availability of wider training opportunities for providers, along with an understanding of the reasonable adjustments some young people will require. Post-16 providers and employers can be offered financial help to make these adjustments similar to that provided to educational settings. This requires shifting the discussion from inclusive education to inclusive work settings and inclusive societies.

Finally, the knowledge and expertise of external services and professionals around SEN emerged as a gap. This was particularly cited about the Connexions Service and Social Services and corresponds to concerns also expressed in earlier research (Abbott & Heslop 2009; Cullen et al., 2009; Grove & Giraud-Saunders 2003).

“If you go to connexions, there aren’t the specialists within Connexions for all the individual and particular additional needs”

SENCo, mainstream school 1

7.3.6 Confusion between transition planning and statement objectives

The failure to link Statement objectives to transition planning emerged in both mainstream and special schools, irrespective of review format. This was also found by Dee (2006) who used a similar methodology (observation of annual reviews) and found that schools found it difficult to discuss transition planning when they reviewed pupils' Statements.

The participants within schools seemed to view the requirement to review Statement objectives as separate to transition planning. By this is meant that even if the purpose of the annual review is to look at the relevance of statement objectives, there was limited awareness of the requirement to change these objectives to reflect a link to the pupil's planning for the future. The focus within objectives on the statements is predominantly academic - literacy, numeracy issues and possibly areas such as attention skills and social skills, but the notion of including objectives with an indication of how these could then be linked to specific skill development targets within IEPs is a limitation.

The gap that was perceived by mainstream schools was that decisions, actions or sharing of information may not happen after reviews.

"I think that the actual review itself I'd like to think is effective but I think that the information sharing afterwards is probably not effective"

SENCo, mainstream school 3

Actions however tended to be limited to surface issues, such as the extent of support a pupil needs in terms of hours given by the LA and not about how the support will be used.

Whether objectives will, ultimately, be changed is also questionable. The system of reviewing statements at secondary level, and whether modified objectives are followed up and monitored, would also be an area for further exploration because they do relate to transition planning post-16.

The case study data did note that the practical aspects of the review can happen, namely parent participation and inviting professionals, but the targets on the pupil's Statement may not always reflect current needs. In the case of PM10 the objective that focussed on the pupil managing anger was acknowledged as needing revision but there was no discussion about how this could be addressed and how desired outcomes could be monitored.

Whether the objectives on her Statement would be revised to include relevance to her transition needs was also questionable. The current form filling exercise of the annual review and the restricted time available may not lend itself to this process.

The tension around statement objectives was also evident in special schools because the focus of the PCR was not on educational matters.

“We haven’t actually teased out exactly what this review is, it is a transition review but who is it for? Is it for social services or is it for education? Because we have to do a review of the young person’s statement every year. So how does that fit in with what we are doing here? I don’t think we have even teased this out properly yet because I have to review this child’s progress against the statement and we are not actually dealing with that in the PCR.”

Assistant head, special school 2

This presents the PCR as a social service driven incentive and professionals within social services facilitating a PCR could therefore steer a review in one specific direction, a discussion relevant for RQ3. This focus on educational objectives leads on to the following section.

7.3.7 Lack of focus on educational objectives, including skill development and related concerns

In RQ1 it was evident that the extent to which the curriculum specifically addressed the development of transition-related skills was questionable. The questions asked tried to get information that could identify what Kohler and Field (2003) called transition-focussed education. This would include awareness of school’s role in teaching self-determination and adaptive behaviour skills and perhaps some information about how a specific skill was taught, particularly if it was identified as an area for development within a review. The interviews carried out in schools were not able to gain examples of this, within both mainstream and special schools, with interviewees giving the impression that these areas were embedded within the curriculum or through PSHE.

The observation of reviews however, showed a conspicuous failure to address these more fundamental outcomes around skill development, such as the enhancement of a pupil's communicative ability, problem-solving skills or the teaching of self-monitoring skills. The development of these skills as goals within transition planning has been identified as important (Flannery et al., 2008; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002).

In the case of PM10 in mainstream school 1, the pupil's behaviour, particularly her limited engagement, was identified as a clear concern by those involved. Yet the focus seemed to be the identification of alternative provision without a consideration of what could be done to help support change her behaviour or to support the promotion of positive behaviour in settings. The professional questionnaires were also limited in describing their transition-specific roles or how they were working to help PM10 improve her behaviour.

Similarly, in mainstream school 3, there were some concerns about PM12's interpretation of language, social interaction and lack of friendships. PM12 was considered to be a high functioning pupil with ASD and had chosen art, graphics, geography and drama as his options. The SENCo discussed the need to consider having to work in a group if he took drama as an option. These concerns around social interaction and communication were not dealt with further within the context of reviewing and creating new statement objectives and strategies to address these, despite being identified as an area of difficulty.

There was also an apparent lack of awareness that there were skills which the school may have to teach the pupil. Both the SENCo's and Connexions PA's comments reflected PM12's teachers' expectations and their own anticipation that the pupil may just need to become an independent learner, without recognition of the teaching or support he may require to be able to develop self-management skills. This suggests a gap in relation to school's transition-focussed education (Kohler & Field, 2003) and suggests that the Connexions PA had more of a generic than specialist approach.

This focus was also lacking in the observation of special school reviews which followed a person-centred format. In PS3 lack of insight about the extent of the pupil's support needs emerged when Connexions suggested that the pupil be given details of an internet site for young people who want to discuss feelings and emotions. There seemed to be an expectation that the pupil will be able to benefit from this opportunity with minimal

support. There was no discussion about the role of the school within this area in terms of pastoral support or the SEAL curriculum.

The need to teach transition-relevant skills also emerged from Connexions and parental data. The parents of pupils in special schools cited concerns about the teaching of self-help skills and social competence around relationships and skills related to community living (refer to section on family involvement in RQ1).

“We have groups of young people who would benefit from training that develops employment skills, self-confidence, self-esteem, as well as some vocational skills and there is work to be done on this, and it does not necessarily have to go hand in hand with the national measures in terms of qualifications.”

Connexions PA, special school 2

As mentioned earlier, the predominant focus on the role of external services within special school reviews could serve to alienate special school staff from transition-focussed education. In view of this suggestion, the background training of review facilitators may also be associated with the extent to which discussions around skill development become a priority.

The superficial focus on destination without consideration of the skills that pupils need to be taught exposes the entire notion of what is important in transition planning and focuses on the changes that need to happen from more of a social model perspective of disability. The teaching of adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills has been linked to positive transition outcomes (Alwell & Cobb, 2006, 2009; Madaus et al., 2008; Wehmeyer et al., 1998).

7.3.8 Limitations in pupil involvement

There were several gaps and barriers related to pupil involvement within specific processes related to transition planning. The achievement of pupil views and involvement in decisions that affect their future was not ascertained, even when pupils had relatively good communication skills. The table of case study information illustrated in Chapter 6 and the review observations carried out in mainstream schools showed that when pupils did not attend their review no document related to their views were necessarily used. There was no

evidence available about whether pupils were involved in identifying targets that could help the SENCo to create new educational objectives for the Statement. This suggests that the views of pupils with SEN may be less sought out within school practice (Heslop & Abbott 2008; Shevlin & Rose 2008).

If the secondary mainstream model of support means that pupils may have subject-specific teaching assistants this could suggest that none of the teaching assistants may possibly take on, or be asked to take on, some responsibility directly related to enhancing pupil involvement in specific transition matters, particularly in the absence of recognised school processes. Moreover, the only pupil documentation that was possibly available was predominantly linked to the annual review.

Pupil aspirations were more likely to be discussed with parents of pupils in mainstream if, as explained earlier, parents were particularly skilled in including these aspects within their discussions. In the interviews with special schools, there was an assumption that staff either knew pupils well enough to know what they wanted because they knew pupils from a very young age, or that pupils did not know what they wanted to do when asked.

Q: How do the pupil's aspirations, which you may have worked on throughout the year, link in with any planning engaged in?

A: We talk about what they wanted to do, but most of them don't know what they want to do. Some of them have unrealistic expectations like wanting to join the army. Mum and dad need to be aware of this and chatting things through with them. We know that for some of our youngsters that would never become a reality."

Assistant head, special school 2

The review observation schedule data within the case study phase contributed extensive insight into the extent and nature of pupil participation within special schools. The action plan that emerged from the PCR included general targets for services but no information about how the pupil could be involved in any of the actions suggested.

Of particular interest was the use of the 'my review booklet'. This booklet was meant to be prepared by or with the pupil prior to the review. It was a visual booklet that was intended to capture information about the pupil's likes, what was important to them now and in the

future and other questions related to the aims of the PCR. However, the booklet information that was actually used across pupil reviews was variable and completed booklets were not always used, particularly for pupils with communication difficulties. The extent to which the information really reflected the views of the pupil was also unknown and at times, questioned by parents.

“We didn’t receive the ‘review booklet’ and I don’t know whether the booklet actually represented his or their (the school/services) views - do they tie in with my son’s choices? For example living in a house on his own - is that his choice or yours? (The school/ services)...did he say that? How did you put it to him?”

Parent PS5 8 months after review

The use of this booklet in preparing pupils for their review was variable across the two special schools. It seemed that special school 1 tried to use this more than special school 2. However, it was clear that pupil participation in reviews was linked to severity of disability, with pupils with severe LD and communication difficulties not really involved. This was also highlighted in previous research about pupil participation, namely that by Carnaby et al., (2003), McConkey and Smyth (2002), Powers et al., (2005) and Ward et al., (2003).

The data suggests the need for schools to use additional resources, including the use of alternative and augmentative communication methods with pupils. Further work is also needed to nurture pupil aspirations and self-advocacy and link these to transition work.

7.3.9 The timing of transition-focussed reviews

The lack of transition focus and specific transition-focussed reviews in mainstream schools has already been identified as a barrier to transition planning. The depth of this study brought an additional underlying issue to the surface associated to the timing of reviews in special schools. Similar to other studies, such as that by Heslop et al., (2002), Abbott and Heslop (2009), and Kaehne and Beyer (2008), going to college or any other post-secondary destination may not be dealt with until the final year of school by external services. This was a concern of both schools and particularly parents. This is an important finding because it had several other implications attached. Firstly an aspect touched on earlier, that schools

are likely to view external services or the receiving setting as those who should take the lead to oversee transition arrangements and options beyond secondary school – a responsibility often taken on by Connexions until the time of writing. However, it also became apparent, particularly from the case study phase, that external services like social care did not always understand the way schools operated and did not usually expect to address options about destinations until the last year or two of special school. Often Connexions were also reliant on the involvement of social care, particularly in terms of financial matters and therefore parents in this study felt that various issues and options were addressed too late. This may appear to reflect a lack of concern for the information and emotional needs of parents.

“I think the preparation for the transition from child to adult services is very poor. A lot of things are considered in the final year of school and they are very rushed. I would have liked to see things happen earlier. There are general transition events to go to but no individualised service”

Parent of PS5

Related to the above issue of the timing of reviews, representation from FE was also a concern for special schools. Despite college links being forged throughout daily practice, FE options relied on being advocated by school staff within reviews because college representatives were only likely to attend Year 14 reviews.

7.3.10 Limitations related to family involvement

There are several gaps identified in terms of family involvement. Involvement of parents of pupils with SEN took place through whole school events in mainstream schools and on a needs-led basis, such as when it is deemed that a pupil would benefit from being “channelled” through the WBL pathway. It suggests an unequal balance of power. The case studies showed that the power balance can be addressed by a skilled parent, proficient in making needs and desires heard, but other parents can find the entire process rather daunting.

“Every year what we do we have a fair at Year 9 that is held in the evening and everyone comes and each staff/curriculum area will have a stall and there will be a brief talk about what options are, what type of child should choose what option and then they get a chance to walk around and have a chat with members of staff. It is very well attended so I would say that they are involved there but I don’t know if they fully understand the processes.”

SENCo, mainstream school 2

“We received a form and pupil booklet to explain what the review was about. Why were the two facilitators standing there? I thought I was coming here to find out what is going to happen to my son after school - where he can go.”

Parent PS2

The parent of this pupil was particularly concerned about her lack of involvement in terms of access to information. She also appeared unaware of the role of the health team within her son’s special school.

Questions related to family involvement posed to the Assistant head in special schools shifted the focus on the PCR with the presumption that the facilitator had the role of informing parents and linking them up with the various services that need to be involved. This may be interpreted as the desire for schools to share the role of working with parents with others who may be perceived to be given more direct roles related to transition planning. The focus on external services also provided less opportunity to gain more insight into the relationship between school and parents, although parental interviews showed more parental satisfaction with school than other services.

Parental interviews within case study data however noted that parents in special school 2 seemed less informed about the PCR process than parents in special school 1. This was related to gaps in preparation work relevant to PCRs and was likely to be linked to the way in which PCRs were introduced in the schools, characterised by variable forms of support from the LA. The availability of a trained PCR facilitator who could spend time with parents to provide information about the review process was a key determining factor.

"I got a phone call from school but I had no information about the set up of the review. If I knew I would have had things written down before.

A booklet was sent out with a letter about the meeting. This was the review booklet...it was not filled in at school."

Parent PS8

7.3.11 Difficulties with external service involvement

Involvement of external services with pupils in mainstream schools is variable, with pupils in mainstream schools not necessarily involved with any external services other than possibly, Connexions. SENCos cited Looked after Children as those pupils likely to be involved with more professionals. The nature of the pupil's difficulties and the SENCos' perception of their needs appear to be associated with external service involvement. Linking with CAMHS emerged as a gap and area for development in two of the mainstream schools, particularly in view of pupils who presented difficulties related to substance misuse, ASD and mental health. This was an interesting outcome that matched recent research carried out by Kaehne (2011) about the lack of CAMHS engagement at transition. Staff shortage and lack of information sharing about therapeutic services and their impact when these were carried out with a pupil, was cited as a problem for schools when services got involved. In the first instance however, SENCos mentioned that a major problem was their attendance at review meetings.

Special schools also cited failure of external services to attend reviews and to inform others about their work, if there was any input, with the pupil. For pupils' transition from special schools, the biggest gap cited was the contribution from children's social services and adult social care. This was discussed frequently, particularly in light of social services supporting the dissemination of PCRs. There was also dissatisfaction with the limited involvement of health professionals with pupils in their schools. Lack of joint working between services also emerged in special schools.

The case study phase illuminated some of these short-comings further. In the case of PM11, multi-agency involvement was characterised by a lack of shared information sharing, accountability and independent operation from each other. There was a query from

Connexions about a social services referral that had been made. School reported that there was no information in writing about the outcome of their initial assessment. However social services told the parent that she did not need a social worker and that Connexions had to be involved. The ‘lay something at somebody's door attitude’ is perhaps a reflection of scarce public resources available at the time of the study, but it is certainly a key barrier to good practice in transition planning.

Parental dissatisfaction with service availability and continuity from external services was common. It is particularly relevant to include the parents’ perspective here.

7.3.12 Barriers and gaps to transition planning identified by parents

The 11 pupil case studies provided the opportunity to gain insight about the difficulties experienced by parents. Difficulties were expressed in relation to transition work as well as the review process. The analysis included differentiation of these two aspects whilst recognising their relatedness.

Parents realised the extensive work that transition preparation required but they felt they had more questions than answers. This reflection tended to heighten their anxiety, although the timing of the parent interviews – being carried out after the pupil reviews – could have contributed to this effect.

Lack of clarity about post-school opportunities was a key concern for all parents within this study, as suggested in research carried out by Abbott and Heslop (2009) and Kaehne and Beyer (2008). All parents were asked to rate how clear they felt, as parents, about the post-secondary opportunities for their son/daughter from a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being very clear. Parents of pupils in special schools were certainly unsure about the young persons’ opportunities, with all but one parent giving a score of 5 or lower.

Parents of pupils in mainstream schools varied in their responses, with parents giving scores between 4 and 10, but even parents who gave a higher clarity score appeared doubtful and expressed anxiety about what would actually happen. For example, the parent of PM11 gave a score of 7 on the clarity rating, but said “there is information ok but what will actually happen is unclear”. Difficulties expressed by parents of pupils in mainstream school

included limited contact with Connexions and restricted job prospects, but dissatisfaction with social care was the one most cited by parents of pupils in special schools. The specific difficulty with the poor links between children and adult social services was a key aspect here (Department of Health, 2001; Department of Health 2009; Heslop et al., 2002).

Parents of pupils in special schools were relatively satisfied about the school's efforts. Their dissatisfaction centred on the quality of external services and in particular, the lack of implementing the action plan that required services to carry out specific tasks that could have meant access to more information about what was available in the future.

"Social services are a waste of time. No help has come from social services. The referral to the adult disability team for a social worker from the adult team has not materialised. This referral was initiated since December 2009."

Parent of PS1, 6 months after review

"Only the school actions have been met, not the actions required from external agencies, including Connexions who came to the review. Since nobody from social services came then the actions were not met. My son will be in Year 14 next year."

Parent of PS5, 8 months after review

For parents of pupils with complex medical needs, access to therapeutic services such as physiotherapy and speech and language therapy was difficult. It transpired that since these services were available within the special school, parents could not access these services within the community. The parent of PS2 felt she constantly hit a brick wall when she informed services that her son had not been receiving individual physiotherapy at school for a long period of time. The review observations showed that some services failed to be present at reviews, and when they did, access to these therapies within adult health services was indeed vague. It confirms the continuing difficulties relating to both disharmony between parents' objectives and those of agencies (Smart, 2004), the lack of help from social services and health (McConkey & Smyth, 2003) and the concerns about the poor quality of adult services when compared to children's services (Abbott & Heslop, 2009; Beresford, 2004; Michael, 2008).

Some parents also thought that pupil views were also not really listened to:

“There has been a suggestion by care management for the pupil to go to residential placement and live away from home but the pupil does not want to go to college far away from home. They need to listen to him.”

Parent of PS3, 6 months after review

The lack of involvement of social services was identified as one of the main gaps in both mainstream and special schools. This included absence at pupil reviews, lack of involvement with families who would benefit from their involvement, and as mentioned above, poor co-ordination between child and adult social care. The latter was particularly conspicuous in the case of pupils in Year 13 attending special schools who were potentially still unknown to these services. In these circumstances it would be unlikely that information already known about a young person would be shared. Even when a social worker was “secured”, the continuity of service provision was a concern. Information about the role of social services was also unclear to schools and families and sometimes questioned by other professionals (e.g. Connexions). The discontinuity between child and adult services therefore remains a major theme of poor transitions (Hudson, 2006). Special schools thought that social services have a role in promoting the PC type of review and that it was them who invested in training up social workers as facilitators who could drive these reviews. However their involvement to actually see transition planning through was still inadequate.

7.3.13 The lack of reliable professional assessments to inform young peoples’ futures

This study suggests that transition planning processes for pupils may not necessarily make reference to educational reports or professional assessments, other than the social workers’ assessments for those young people with complex needs in special schools and subject teacher’s reports in mainstream schools. Access to professional assessments or mention of the need to seek these was not a feature of reviews observed. Since Section 139a was said to rely on such information this outcome was surprising. It was interesting to note that there was no explicit reference to the compilation of Section 139a either. The way in which

professional assessments can help in vocational preparation and career development within transition planning is still a potentially undeveloped concept.

In the secondary years, professional assessment and subsequent advice about intervention may help to guide educators in terms of skill development and/or provide further insight about young peoples' strengths, aspirations and future opportunities. This could help schools to provide a co-ordinated education (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Kohler & Field, 2003).

The review observation data of PS3 and PS5 showed a lack of awareness or even discussion about pupils' profile of abilities and difficulties, particularly in terms of pupils' knowledge about friendship, relationships and issues related to sexuality and sexual behaviour. In the case of PS3 there were instances throughout the review when there was uncertainty about his understanding of the suggestions being proposed by some participants and as discussed earlier, suggestions were given based on assumptions.

The carers of PS7 stressed about the needs and difficulties of young people with ASD who were non-verbal. Considering that a pupil's expressive skills and people's perception of pupil's receptive language skills had an impact on the extent of pupil involvement and on actions decided, there is a lot to be said about the need for thorough assessment and intervention of communication skills. This work would also be part of essential information that would need to be shared amongst services.

RQ2 has identified a relatively invisible transition practice in mainstream schools and a visible but blurred transition in special schools. The understanding of barriers and gaps is a necessary process to reflect on suggestions that can be put forward.

7.4 RQ 3: Does the introduction of a person-centred review (PCR) lead to more specific transition plans that address future outcomes for pupils and say how future aspirations may be achieved, compared to regular reviews?

The case study data provides an opportunity to reflect on the delivery of PCRs and whether this ensures adequate planning for pupils with SEN. There were six pupils who had PCRs in special schools. The PCRs observed were carried out in the prescribed format presented in the Appendix 3. At the time of the study, mainstream schools did not adopt a PCR format so the other 5 pupils had regular reviews that were guided by the Statement objectives and teacher reports. According to the case study data, the simple answer to this question is that the PCR did attempt to draw up an action plan aimed at establishing tasks services needed to accomplish, but this may not necessarily lead to more specific transition plans.

Special schools viewed the PCR as a way of trying to bring in the involvement of adult services and particularly social care, because access to this service was deemed problematic. The review observation schedules and the parental interviews have shown that the PCR has some positive features, namely it aims to enhance pupil involvement and provides more opportunity for parents to be involved in the decision-making processes, but on its own it may not be sufficient to guarantee constructive transition plans.

The following discussion will consider the outcomes that emerge as important. The codes relevant to each outcome are presented in the brackets. The resulting debate is based on case study data and relevance to pupil cases and units of analysis within these is made to clarify the points being made.

The following outcomes emerge as important:

1. The school was not an equal partner in the review process. Educational matters were clearly side-lined to give precedence to more pressing service matters. [Tensions related to PCRs; External service involvement]
2. The perceived post-secondary outcome for the pupil can have an impact on directing the focus of the PCR and in determining which actions will be prioritised at the end

of the meeting. [Meaning of transition as external service involvement for post-secondary destinations; Action plan vs. transition plan]

3. Responsibilities assigned within action plans were rather loose and there was uncertainty about whether actions would be fulfilled. Failure to appoint an action chaser or a recognised key worker reduced the probability that actions will be met. The requirement to draw up a distinct pupil transition plan needs to be made more explicit and designating responsibility for the monitoring and reviewing of a pupil's transition plan is likely to be associated with the achievement of outcomes. [Action plan vs. transition plan; responsibility/lack of responsibility for transition planning]
4. Limited focus on teaching and learning towards skill building; the identified outcomes from a PCR did not entail a thorough consideration of the skills that the pupil would need to learn to achieve specific outcomes. So this review type contributed nothing more in terms of transition-focussed education than the regular review. [Curriculum areas that focus on transition-related skills; confusion between transition planning and statement objectives]
5. Assessment of skills and section 139a was not available and there was no sharing of assessment information which could contribute to the intended collaborative discussion and goal setting of PCRs. There was limited attempt at joining up work across services. [Connexions and SEN/LDD assessments; lack of information sharing among professionals]
6. The quality of preparation work carried out with parents and joint working about PCP thinking carried out in schools will have an impact on shared ownership and utility of the review. [Family involvement; Preparation for PCR (parents); tensions related to PCRs]

Some of these outcomes benefit from some further discussion. The delivery of a PCR can help to identify some form of an action plan but whether this was synonymous to a transition plan is a fundamental question. The quality of action plans was variable, depending on who was present at the PCR. Some actions were rather “loose” which meant that they were not specific enough to explain what needs to happen and what the action would achieve. To describe point 2 above, if the perceived post-secondary outcome for the pupil was moving on to college, the action would involve Connexions to offer the standard

practice of helping parents visit colleges, but there was little discussion about which courses will help the pupil to develop named skills and why. In essence, there was no broad plan regarding what outcome college could eventually lead to, an argument presented within the earlier literature.

The actions were compiled by participants with the help of an independent facilitator who did not have responsibility to oversee them. These actions were then distributed to parents and services by the school to ensure that they would be “acted upon”. Follow-up telephone interviews carried out with parents six to eight months following the PCR indicated that this was not the case however. The results of this study support the findings of Ward et al.

(2003) in terms of lack of follow-up. Parents generally expressed low satisfaction (5 or less from a 10 point scale) about the young person’s future planning. The actions drawn up had little significance, mainly because of poor communication and contact between services and parents or between services themselves. It is essential to mention that the post-PCR follow up was gained from four of the potential six parents/carers that took part in the pupil case studies in special schools. This indicated that parental satisfaction with social services and Connexions is poor. Viewed from this perspective, the action plan that emerged from PCRs that were observed may have enhanced awareness of pupils on services’ caseloads and promoted discussion about possible post-secondary destinations, but it failed to lead to an implementation of the actions.

The failure in implementation represents an important core limitation of PCR (Michaels and Ferrara 2005). What is ultimately important is what transition actions get agreed upon and implemented. If implementation fails then follow up is unlikely and this may be because current protocols do not include elements of accountability for promised actions.

According to Michaels and Ferrara (2005), the collaborative process in person-centred planning means that stakeholders maintain focus on both process and outcomes.

Professionals and service managers must therefore reflect on what this means in terms of service delivery, if services are to be really person-centred. However, the multi-agency gathering may question the collaborative component because of the absence of key players, the position of the school within the PCR framework, and due to more preoccupation with the structural aspects of the review. This is particularly important as austerity measures bite

and the number of external professionals is reduced. Hence point 6 above represents the synergistic collaboration that is a determining factor of the other core elements of PCR.

There is a contentious issue to discuss here. The use of PCRs has been promoted by social care as a way of planning for the futures of pupils, particularly those with complex care needs. Staff members from social care are likely to steer reviews in particular directions based on the roles they perceive and their service priorities. However, it is argued here that the action plan and its implementation may lack a consideration of learning objectives that need to be addressed within the final years of secondary provision. It may also fail to address details that parents or carers say they need. This may be addressed in post Green paper (Department for Education, 2011) planning for young people from the age of 2 to 25 years that encompasses social care, health and SEN.

Perhaps the best example of the limited consideration of skills that the pupil needed to learn to achieve was that of PS3, where although it was agreed that the pupil had to be helped to maximise his independence skills, there was very limited discussion about how these were going to be facilitated and developed.

The current framework of PCRs is therefore limited in ensuring that a pupil's transition plan addresses the development, maintenance and generalisation of skills because its design may restrict school staff from evaluating and revising educational objectives. What and how questions were not always tackled; for example, how will Johnny be helped to prepare to access x course at college? What academic and non-academic programmes do we need to think about? What specific skills does Johnny need to be taught? How will skills teaching take place and how will it be evaluated? What assistive technology may Johnny need? Whether these questions are considered may also be related to the background and skill of the facilitator. The data of this study indicates that the PCRs observed did not help school and services identify the adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills that the young people in the study needed help to develop. Organisations supporting the proliferation of PCRs may claim that this does not match the intention of PCRs if carried out appropriately, and hence this could point to the danger of variants of PCRs being disseminated by people who have not been sufficiently trained in PC thinking and PC processes.

Schools became concerned with the structural detail of the process rather than the bigger picture of transition planning. They were very much at the receiving end of PCRs and within the realm of competing priorities, PCRs may be carried out as a bureaucratic process without reflection on what it is that it intends to facilitate. Historical events may play a role here, since teachers and school senior management have long been expected to implement several initiatives driven by the National Curriculum. Since this has been introduced, there has been no freedom to plan and shape the curriculum or the schools' organisational processes. With pedagogy prescribed by Government through national delivery vehicles like National Strategies and with inspections carried out by Ofsted, teachers are likely to fail to take the initiative to develop and extend more pupil-focussed practice, such as extending the concept of achievement through the development of a holistic curriculum.

The PCR as delivered within the schools involved in this study, may not be a fool proof approach for all pupils with SEN because although it promoted pupil presence, it did not ensure pupil active involvement and ownership from school and services, to engage in PC practice and implementation of actions. The case study data of PS5 indicated that contrary to what one of the assistant head teachers in a special school thought, the pupil review booklet prepared prior to the meeting, did not always have the desired impact on the review process. The parent of PS5 commented about the reliability and validity of the information in the booklet and about the extent to which her son really contributed to it. The PCR may therefore benefit from additional work around pupil voice and pupil participation.

The list of actions gathered from the PCR could risk becoming a mere paper exercise, a single event that falls short from fitting into the wider practice of person-centredness and transition planning, a warning that has already been voiced by Mansell and Beadle Brown (2004). Essentially, there may be little difference, if any, from the action plan that results from using the CAF, as was the case in one of the mainstream schools, unless the responsibility of an action chaser is stipulated.

This work has shown that the PCR cannot stand on its own and that further development of both the review process and how this fits in within the wider transition planning process is necessary. The format of PCR observed appears to have been endorsed by social services for

pupils with more complex health and social care needs, although this study highlights shortcomings in terms of its delivery and tracking of action implementation. Information about PCRs, the quality of the preparation for PCRs, and an understanding of the philosophy and practice of person-centred thinking, not just within school but also across involved services, will have an impact on the focus and goals of a PCR. This, in essence is similar to any approach within a review process.

Hence it is argued, that the framework of PCRs observed may offer a more engaging opportunity than regular reviews, but in isolation may not be enough to ensure effective transition planning. This may be a key reason why PCRs may require adjustments if they are to be promoted and delivered within mainstream and special schools and if they are to foster young people's life skills. Nevertheless, annual reviews in mainstream schools may benefit from some of the solution-focussed features of the PCR to be able to address transition planning to post-school destinations, rather than solely concentrating on the evaluation of statement objectives. The ways in which transition planning and statement objectives can be linked at Year 9 and beyond emerges as an area for development.

Chapter 7 has recognised the complexity of the real world of transition planning in both mainstream and special schools (RQ1). It has discussed outcomes related to pupil, family, school contexts and external services. This discussion then led to the identification of several barriers and gaps to transition work (RQ2), drawing out differences and similarities between mainstream and special schools. Finally, the debate concentrated on evaluating the PCR in terms of its ability to develop transition planning and enhance implementation (RQ3). This chapter has highlighted several areas for development and led to appreciable reflection on how the 'map of transition' can be refined to suggest models of service delivery that could promote good practice. The next chapter presents thoughts about possible development and a concluding discussion which aims to provide a complete, connected debate on transition planning.

8 Chapter 8: Concluding Discussion

This chapter reflects on the findings presented in Chapter 7. The outcomes of this study highlighted several areas that would benefit from further development and change – of both the map of transition and service delivery at transition. This final chapter therefore focusses on two main subheading posed as questions (8.1 and 8.2) that are put forward to shape the discussion.

8.1 Can the ‘map of transition’ be refined and developed further to suggest a model of service delivery that ensures good transition practice?

The critical literature review was the first step to developing the original map of transition that initiated this work. The following diagrams present refined components that promote good practice in transition based on the data in mainstream (Figure 8.1) and special schools (Figure 8.2). The components of employment agencies and FE are not included in these diagrams since they were not a main focus of this study, and to allow the spatial clarification of other components.

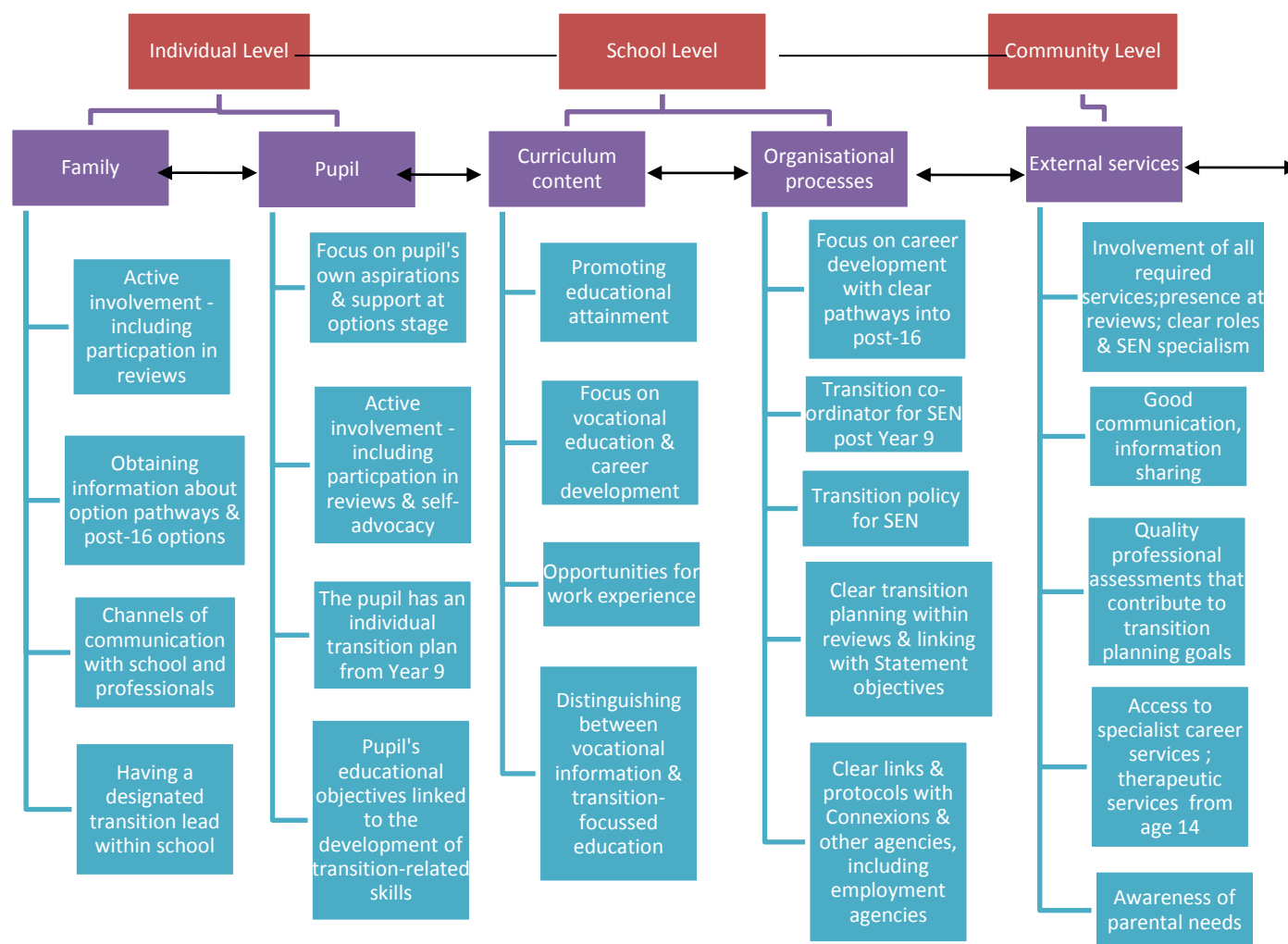


Figure 8-1: Good transition practice in mainstream schools

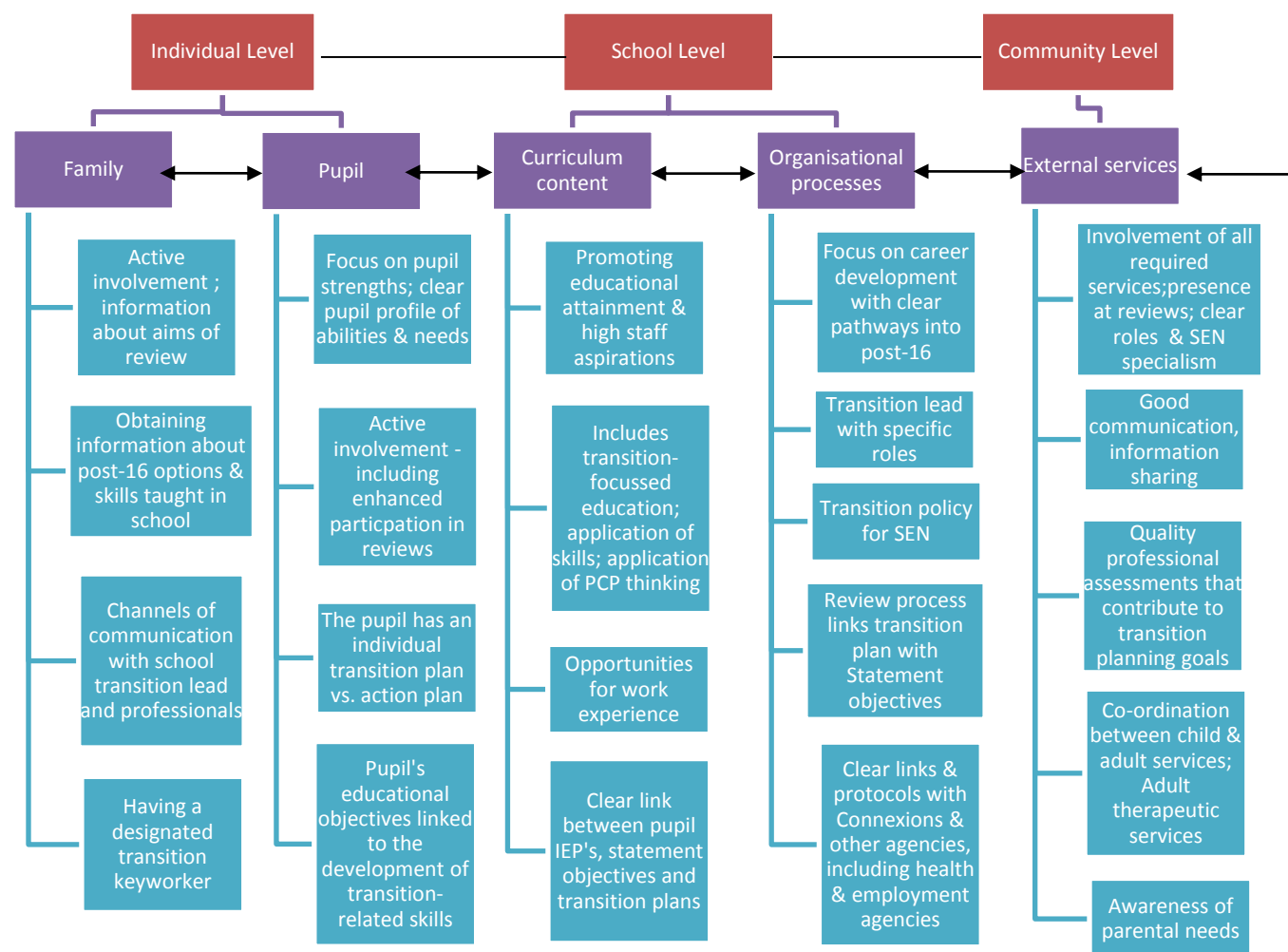


Figure 8-2: Good transition practice in special schools

8.2 How can knowledge about barriers and facilitators help to suggest new frameworks to service delivery?

Identifying the barriers and gaps within transition work led to reflection that enabled an understanding that could try to suggest ways of improving transition planning. The overall study indicates that attention needs to focus on the status of transition planning for pupils with SEN. There are appreciable gaps for pupils who have a Statement, such as for those with ASD, but particularly for those pupils at SA+ in mainstream schools.

This study has shown that pupils with SEN in mainstream schools may be channelled into particular option choices and pathways, and the way in which this happens and the basis for the decision is at times unclear. Currently there are no organisational processes that ensure explicit school roles in transition preparation for pupils with SEN. Those on SA+ who go on work-based learning pathways tend to be pupils with SEBD, and they may not continue to be monitored by SENCos. With regards to these pupils with SEBD, interviews with WBL co-ordinators were an additional ingredient to this study, contributing important information about this specific group. However, training that starts with awareness and continues on practice within mainstream schools is warranted since transition planning from Year 9 did not feature as a recognisable process or entity.

An early start of the alternative curriculum for those at SA+ could place pupils at risk of “slipping through the radar” of services. Ultimately, there can be limited information about these pupils’ SEN at post-16 transition. The pupils within the case studies with SEBD had a Statement of SEN, which may increase the chance of safeguarding SENCo responsibility and service continuity, because the pupils’ needs are likely to be recognised in a format that Connexions and others can access easily, and schools are more obliged to allocate resources for their support. It therefore becomes apparent that some young people may be better served than others at transition (Michael, 2008; Sloper et al., 2010).

Since pupils may experience variability in the quality of their later transition planning for pupils at SA+, this variability may ultimately contribute to the attrition phenomenon post-16 (Caton & Kagan 2006), if their transition needs are not appropriately addressed. The way in which pupils are channelled into option pathways may be perceived as a structural

inequality (Pallas, 2004; Yates et al., 2011) and can have an impact on the nature of post-16 opportunities of young people and on the risk of becoming NEET. A Statement of SEN within a mainstream school could have the subtle potential of facilitating a pupil's access to options within the academic curriculum. The other side of the coin is the implication that someone with a Statement could potentially benefit from some aspect of WBL but may not have the opportunity to pursue this.

The data within this study triggered further thinking about how transition planning can become more effective. One of the ways in which this can start to happen is for school staff and external services (including the LA) to establish some degree of correspondence about the meaning of transition planning, to gain more insight about the concerns of parents and to be clear about the tasks transition planning entails. The results indicate that schools will unequivocally benefit from increased awareness of and training about transition planning from secondary school and their role within this.

However, the needs of special schools may, in some respects, be different from the needs of mainstream schools. In special schools emphasis on type of review has the potential of diverting the focus from the processes that really matter. If the reasons attached to why the style of review is changed to a person-centred one are not fully understood, then this is unlikely to influence services and support to consider a range of future opportunities. The likely or even assumed college and/or day centre destination perpetuated also shows limited depth of outlook, which lacks discussion not only about alternatives but also around the quality of courses and experiences within these destinations.

New processes such as the PCR have been introduced without laying the foundations, such as background training initiatives focussed on Code of Practice guidelines, and an understanding of transition planning from a person-centred philosophy within school settings themselves. Parallel to this, guidance around roles and responsibilities in schools has been rather loose and open to interpretation. Schools and external services currently lack consistency around what is to be done and why. Transition has been fraught with complexity because the various settings and services have interpreted transition planning from the lens of their service policies, amidst their own limited resources and competing agendas, and there has been no connected approach and shared vision attached to a clear

system for transition support. The LA will have to devise new protocols that would be able to secure visibility of pupils with SEN (including those without a Statement) to the services they require.

8.2.1 Some thoughts about social services

Although Connexions have been seen to have an important role, adult social services are supposedly also key players in transition work. This study has shown several limitations of social service teams, similar to the findings of earlier research by McConkey and Smyth (2002, 2003) and Heslop and Abbott (2007). Problems such as capacity, knowledge about transition and SEN, and service-led vs. pupil led approaches have emerged.

Families currently seem to struggle with the concept that social services tends to take on more of a commissioning role rather than actually delivering a specific service themselves. The data shows that it may be time for services to reflect on their philosophy of service delivery and their role with pupils and families, and evaluate whether this matches what pupils' and families' needs. In relation to social services it has become apparent that there is a need to discuss the priority of working with pupils with SEN and disabilities (Hudson, 2006; Malin & Race, 2010) and more specifically what this work involves. This may change in the light of commissioning roles and the possibility that parents may themselves become commissioners of services.

8.2.2 Some thoughts about government policy

Although government policy may be thought to have been particularly vocal about the importance of transition planning, this study shows that much more work needs to be done to clarify policy, and for policy to be translated into practice, with clear roles and responsibilities defined. This study suggests that code of practice guidelines may be a good starting point, but this is a field that requires more concrete regulation and coaching. One hopes that Chapter 4 of the Green Paper Support and Aspiration (Department for Education, 2011) will lead to policy that lays out the specific tasks that need to be pursued. So for example, protocols that help to clarify the working relationships between external services and schools are required, but these need to be based on a shared understanding of the

meaning of transition planning, *when* to start to think about post-secondary transition, *what* is to be worked on and suggestions about *who* could carry out required tasks.

This study suggests that government may need to address the challenge of how schools will be made more accountable if transition practices are to improve. It therefore echoes the claim made by other researchers (e.g. Rusch et al., 2009) that schools are not really being held accountable for providing an education that helps to attain FE or employment as an outcome for pupils, and meeting the transition needs of pupils with less well-defined behaviour difficulties (Dewson et al., 2004).

Having discussed the predicaments of government policy, this last section will present some suggestions related to school improvement and external services. These are seen to be facilitators of transition planning that have emerged from this study. These suggestions also involved reflections on the data achieved from parents because awareness of parental perceptions is important if services are to reduce the gap between what they offer and what is needed (Kaehne & Beyer, 2011).

8.2.3 Suggestions for mainstream schools

In view of the gaps and barriers discussed the following ways forward are suggested for mainstream schools:

- A **transition policy** within schools or an inclusion policy with reference to transition planning post-16. This will help to enhance the status of post-secondary transition planning and establish a **long-term view of transition**.
- Appointing a **designated transition planning co-ordinator** with responsibility for pupils with SEN from Year 9 onwards. The outcomes of this study suggest that this transition co-ordinator role needs to be distinct and separate from the Year 7 transition designation.
- Developing **transparent structures for transition support** for young people with SEN to include pupils on SA+; this may become more essential depending on the framework of support levels that government may develop to replace current levels of support and Statements of SEN. Pupils at SA+ may benefit from a transition review

at Year 9 that considers their options and future more collaboratively. This may also help schools to review their SEN register based on a clear outline of level of need.

- Reviewing the aim and content of annual reviews (or their replacement) from Year 9 onwards; **Statement objectives need to have transition-relevance** so that they can be linked to learning targets on pupil IEPs. Schools need to think beyond the subject-specificity of targets, particularly for pupils with ASD and social, emotional and behaviour needs. The Year 9 review is also the point at which opportunities for work experience need to be discussed. New annual review documentation can be drawn up to help schools to consider these areas within their meetings. This may need to be coupled up with training about transition-focussed education, which can address the way in which IEP targets and Statement objectives acquire transition-relevance.
- Increasing pupil involvement in the matters that concern them and improving methods whereby **pupil voice** is sought. The starting point could be involving pupils in setting transition-related targets within their own IEPs if a clear system is set up within school.
- Recognising the **need for reliable assessments**; Schools need to have access to services (or financial resources to access services) which acknowledge and endorse a role in the transition preparation and/or reliable assessment of pupil needs. Professionals such as educational psychologists are seen to be in a prime position to take on assessment work and to provide advice. Schools also need to make better use of data they already hold on pupils.
- By the end of Year 9 pupils with SEN need to be involved in **drawing up a transition plan with the designated transition co-ordinator**. This needs to be recognised as a distinct document that can be revised periodically. It could eventually feed into the Section 139a (or equivalent). If Connexions are replaced, working arrangements between the new service and school need to be formalised, including a clear understanding about who is responsible to compile the Section 139a (or equivalent).
- Year 9 option selection could benefit from greater transparency and collaboration. School's senior management need to reflect on the way in which the school's opportunity structure can select and limit opportunities. Pupils with SEN and their parents require additional support to the generic events that are currently in place.

- Finally pupils with SEN need to leave school with a transition portfolio that can act as a link document to support the young person's future aspirations. Secondary schools can enhance their accountability in the same way as primary schools play a significant role in sharing relevant information with secondary schools.

8.2.4 Suggestions for special schools

- A **transition policy** that makes explicit reference to transition planning post 16 and the role of the school. This will help to enhance the status of post-secondary transition planning for pupils in special schools.
- Appointing a **designated transition lead** with specific responsibilities to link with external services and parents.
- Reviewing the **aim and delivery of annual reviews or PCRs** to reflect an educational focus besides the transition between services. Schools may want to consider this within their school development plans.
- Special schools will benefit from training about **transition-focussed education** and person-centred philosophy. Schools need to be supported to develop specialist intervention based on an understanding of the adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills which their pupils will benefit from in their adult lives. This could be linked to the work-related learning curriculum and PSHE. Specific areas that need attention include relationships, personal hygiene and sex education for people with learning disabilities.
- **Pupil active involvement** needs further work; this could be facilitated within a social communication curriculum that uses approaches to teach skills that can be used to increase pupil participation and address pupil aspirations. Using tools that gain pupil views outside of the review can be useful for those pupils who may find it hard to cope with the social demands of a review situation.
- The transition lead or co-ordinator can be responsible to oversee the development of a pupil's transition plan document till the pupil is still in school. Clear protocols with external services will identify the key professionals who school can access to help build this document.

- Finally pupils in special schools also need to leave school with a transition portfolio that can act as a link document to support the young person's future aspirations.

8.2.5 Suggestions related to external services and the LA

The development of effective external services is possibly the most complex facet of transition matters and as already mentioned there is dire need for clear protocols that specify the roles and responsibilities of existing services and schools. This study had no transition protocols between services to investigate and the LA may want to work on devising clear protocols. However, in the light of Kaehne and O'Connell's (2010) research outlining inadequacies in transition protocols, this study would also propose the following:

- Developing a transition multi-professional service – i.e. a multi-professional service based within one team.
- The need for a specialist careers advisors, possibly within the transition multi-professional team.

If transition is to be well served professionals working within such a service will need protected time, rather than be expected to fulfil this along with other generic duties. The transition multi-professional team would need to include transition key workers for families and professionals with specialist knowledge and skills who can liaise with schools. This development would particularly aim to help out in the transition of pupils with ASD, ADHD and other LD who are slipping through the net. If the key worker role is appropriately developed he/she would be the ideal person to liaise with the school's transition lead. The development of the multi-professional service must not serve to shift attention from developing systems within school.

The tendency to seek alternative provision for pupils with SEBD at Year 9 or even at Year 8, particularly those without a Statement of SEN, can be an important variable within this complex field. Although this was not a key area of investigation within this study, the emerging invisibility of transition planning for these pupils and the lack of specific structures of support within schools can further reinforce the probability of exclusion from mainstream school. With more public services having reduced capacity to meet the high demands of schools, there could be a shift to try to move pupils to more specialised settings. This may

engage the LA in seeking to develop alternative provision for these pupils even prior to option choice, rather than seek to help mainstream schools become more inclusive settings. This phenomenon may see the development of specialist transition services for specific groups of young people with SEN, starting with young people with SEBD. This area will, by all means, require a separate thesis.

The lack of advisors with specialist training in SEN is an outcome of this study and has been seen to be the Achilles' heel of the Connexions service (Abbott & Heslop 2009; Cullen et al., 2009, Ward et al., 2003). The linking to the current political scenario is inevitable. The Government has announced that from spring 2012 two national careers services will be launched in England and Wales. Whatever the new Connexions will be, or whoever is deemed to be in a position to support transition of pupils with SEN, there needs to be a clear message - that a specialist role is not only an asset, but also a requirement, because generalist roles have not been adequate to meet the needs of specific groups of young people. Knowledge and on-going training need to form part of a skilled approach to working within the field of SEN. This coupled up with the ability to reflect about the individual needs of pupils and their families will be the way forward. Furthermore, career advisors and transition key workers will require appropriate management and supervision.

An article in a national newspaper (Tickle, 22nd October, 2011) presented a worrying picture of the future of careers advice. It describes the Government's proposal for web-based careers services and a reduction of face-to-face advice. Whether this would benefit those pupils with SEN and other vulnerable pupils at risk of NEET is highly questionable. The Government's Education Bill also proposes that head teachers buy in careers services from independent private providers with no extra funding made available. In the light of the results of this study, a word of caution is advised, particularly in terms of how and for whom schools will decide to purchase these services. The inevitable question left to ask is related to the future shape of the current statutory role of Connexions for those pupils with a Statement. How is this likely to change in new government policy?

Finally it is inevitable, considering the current government drive towards the creation of more academies, that we reflect on the extent to which pupils with SEN will be included and one step further, prioritised. If as this study indicates, the in house focus on transition

planning is limited and predominantly dependent on external LAs, then how will the government be making academies accountable for the transition planning of pupils with SEN? Will the independence of schools mean that this could become entirely dependent on the lobbying potential of parents? These questions are highly contentious and provoke a feeling of uncertainty around the future of SEN matters.

If LAs are extending their responsibilities for young people with SEN until age 25 then they should consider setting up a core transition team with professionals who work solely on transition matters. The functions of a LA transition strategic group will have to work on implementing these developments, facilitating good practice and devising new ways of tracking pupil destinations. In particular, there is a need to prioritise hands-on roles for supporting young people and their parents over managerial roles that offer little to the quest for improving young people's skills and parents' emotional and psychological needs.

8.2.6 Implications for educational psychologists

In the light of the Green paper (Department for Education, 2011) and the changing times faced by the profession of educational psychologists, this could be an exciting time for new challenges for educational psychologists in England – at both strategic levels and individual pupil levels of working.

Transition planning is an area that offers opportunities to Educational Psychology to use research and principles of applied psychology (MacKay, 2006a). In the light of poor multi-agency working, EPs can also help LAs to develop the synergistic collaboration that the field requires. At the level of schools, EPs are well placed to help emphasise the “educational” focus that has seemingly been put aside as a result of the emphasis on external service involvement, and emphasise the “psychology” within the field of transition. This could be developmental psychology and the transition into adulthood and/or organisational psychology and the development of organisational systems and protocols.

One of the areas that can be developed, and which emerged from the data, includes joint working with schools, Connexions or their replacement services, in terms of suitable assessments and advice relevant to the future of pupils with SEN. The area of appropriate

learning difficulty/disability assessments is a central one in terms of development, considering the need for professionals with knowledge about SEN and skills in approaches to include pupil voice. With changes in the school leaving age it is likely that educational psychologists may naturally start to extend their work with older adolescents. It is also hoped that this can present opportunities for EPs to develop another specialist area.

In the short-term it is envisaged that educational psychologists could be well placed to get involved in training initiatives about transition planning in both mainstream and special schools. EPs can have important roles in training teachers and people in other services about how to gain pupil views and how they can help parents and pupils to understand the full range of options available. EPs could also be involved in supporting the development of support within these options (e.g. WBL, local employment, supported employment and supported living).

8.3 Limitations of this study

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, in terms of structural limitations of this manuscript, copious amounts of data have been generated and due to word limit constraints, not all data available could be included.

The research work was based in schools within one local authority. I was not in a position to randomly select various localities, settings and participants across England. The choice of pupil cases was purposeful, although there was effort in selecting pupils with a range of SEN. The use of multiple pupil case studies has provided robustness to allow analytical generalisation rather than statistical generalisation. The study is well located within the literature and this has allowed further analytical exploration between wider research and the NW borough where this study takes place.

This study did not have a longitudinal design. It is recommended that future studies try to track pupils over time. Moreover, the discussion of data does not try to elicit differences amongst the three mainstream schools or amongst the two special schools. It is acknowledged that each school will have its own culture and ethos but the schools were not the entities treated as cases in this study.

The phenomenon of social desirability throughout the interviewing process is one that cannot be excluded. As part of complex social interaction, there is the chance that participants could have given answers that may be perceived as desired from the interviewer (a psychologist and local authority officer known to be involved in transition work). The professional questionnaires in particular, were dependent on the willingness of professionals and any reluctance from professionals within some services could have led to restricting information. The tension around the delivery of PCRs in special schools was also quite high at the time of the study. However, as many of the quotes indicate the processes and issues described by the participants are far from perfect and provide a basis for development in the locality.

One main limitation is that there was no opportunity of observing PCRs in mainstream schools. Future investigations of the delivery of PCRs in relation to transition planning for pupils with SEN would be recommended, particularly in view of some of the findings in this study.

Future research should consider the following:

- Further exploration of what really happens at the point of leaving secondary school and moving into post-secondary destinations
- Investigating the course content and quality of support within college destinations and how these are appropriately linked to areas like supported employment and independent living skills appropriate to the needs of young people with SEN
- The further development of PCRs

8.4 Conclusion

The following points summarise the main outcomes of this work:

- There is variability in quantity and quality of support for pupils with SEN at the stage of option choices at Year 9
- Transition planning within mainstream schools is a relatively invisible transition and within special schools it is visible but blurred

- Pupils at SA+ and particularly those with SEBD are more likely to be channelled into WBL, more likely to have invisible transitions, and to be at risk of NEET
- High parental agency is likely to be associated with access to information and support at transition
- Statement reviews may pay little attention to transition-relevant pupil goals and action plans are unlikely to lead to distinct transition plans
- PCRs may help accentuate service transitions over the identification of transition-relevant goals

This study shows that transition planning for pupils with SEN in both special and mainstream schools is indeed a multifaceted area. The last decade has seen more pupils with SEN attending mainstream schools, but the nature of their inclusive experiences and opportunities for planning their post-secondary transition can be variable. This study has tried to include the perspective of both parents and professionals, as suggested by Powers et al. (2009) and Kaehne and Beyer (2011). Through interviews within schools, stakeholders and pupil case studies this study has:

1. Exposed the complexity of transition planning and explored barriers, gaps and facilitators of transition planning to understand transition planning within the real world
2. Identified the need to raise the profile of transition planning from a whole-school perspective
3. Shown that the code of practice guidance and government documents have not had the desired impact on transition planning in practice for all pupils with SEN
4. Shown that transition planning is an area that requires the delivery of appreciable training – to schools, external services and others within the LA – particularly around the meaning of transition planning to try to achieve some consistent understanding and connection between stakeholders
5. Suggested that transition planning for pupils may need to be approached differently within mainstream and special schools, but it requires schools to organise an explicit system of support for pupils with SEN
6. Identified the need for clear responsibilities and protocols for schools and services. These will need to include specific tasks that need to be clearly stated and delivered

7. Identified parental needs and difficulties to help services understand what they are missing out
8. Shown there is more to be done in terms of pupil voice and pupil involvement
9. Recommended that schools and services need to carry out appropriate assessments that yield information that can be used to help identify appropriate objectives and future plans
10. Shown the importance of skilled career advisors proficient in supporting young people with SEN and raised questions about how transition to post-16 opportunities will be supported in the future

Transition planning continues to be a massive area for development given the on-going national changes and particularly in the light of the Green Paper (2011). More significantly it is an area relevant to enhancing more positive futures for young people with SEN.

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Appendix 1: Information for recruitment of participants

This appendix consists of:

- Letters sent to schools
- School information sheet
- Consent form for participants

Dear Head teacher,

At the inclusion conference on the 2nd November 2009, I presented an outline of a piece of doctoral research on transition planning that is being conducted to help the Local Authority improve outcomes for children with SEN. I am writing to ask for your participation in this study.

This would involve:

- An interview with the key person involved in transition work and reviews (possibly the SENCo or lead teacher).
- Identification of families for case studies with whom I could do more follow-up work.

Rationale for the study

Nationally and locally there is a major initiative focussed on transition support and provision as young people with special educational needs (SEN) transition to adult life. Transition is one of the 5 work streams that make up the DCSF/DH Aiming High for disabled children agenda aimed to transform children's services.

This study is linked to this agenda and aims to explore the transition planning processes for pupils with a statement of SEN in Year 9 to Year 11. This will involve interviews in schools and selection of pupil case studies. I would like to involve you in contributing to an understanding of transition work by arranging to meet designated staff members who are involved with SEN pupils for an interview.

This study utilises real world research about aspects of the transition process that is linked to good practice as well as identify gaps in multi-professional service delivery.

In the next few days I will be in contact with you to make arrangements to meet the member of staff who could link with me for this project.

Yours sincerely

Louise Bason

School Information Sheet

You have been invited to participate in a study focussed on transition planning for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and their families.

Nationally and locally there is a major initiative focussed on transition support and provision as young people with special educational needs (SEN) transition to adult life. This study is linked to this agenda and aims to explore the transition planning processes for pupils in Year 9 to Year 11 with a statement of SEN or at School Action Plus in mainstream schools and in Year 12 to Year 14 in special schools.

As an Educational Psychologist, I am frequently involved in working with school staff, pupils and their parents. I have chosen to explore this area of transition practice because it is an important phase for pupils and their families. This part of the study involves interviews with staff in schools and with parents and case studies around specific pupils.

I would like to involve you in this study in order to achieve a better understanding of transition planning for students in your school and to achieve further insight about issues at both organisational and individual levels. This will be carried out via an interview with a designated member of staff, such as the SENCo. A small number of pupils will be selected to follow as case studies in order to consider the transition planning process in more detail. Please read the following information about important questions you may have and ask me any further questions if you need clarification.

1. Who will conduct the study?

The study will be conducted by Louise Bason (Educational Psychologist). This work is being pursued as part of a doctoral thesis at the University of Manchester.

2. Title of the study

What matters in secondary transition? Planning the transition process for students with special educational needs

3. What is the aim of the study?

The purpose of the study is to explore the way transition planning is currently being carried out in schools and how other agencies are involved. It aims to identify aspects of good practice in transition 14+ and to identify any gaps or barriers to transition work. School staff, pupils and parents are viewed as key contributors to this study. Information derived could be beneficial towards suggesting future service delivery around transition.

4. Why have I been chosen?

If possible I would like to carry out interviews in most if not all mainstream and special schools. Following this, a few cases of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or who are on school action plus will be selected in order to be able to obtain detailed information about their transition planning processes. Pupils within your school in Year 9 or above are possible participants in this study.

5. What would I be asked to do?

Following an interview with a designated staff member (E.g. SENCo), the process of participation will involve the following:

- Observation of pupil review and note taking throughout the review
- Interview or carry out a questionnaire with parents
- Gain information from other professionals or school staff involved
- Meet the pupil briefly to gain his/her view
- Access to pupil statement of special educational needs and other relevant information (e.g. professional reports)

6. What happens to the information collected?

The information will be used to achieve an understanding of how transition planning is currently being carried out and what it involves. The information will be added to other information derived from other participants and used to identify

good practice as well as gaps. Collective information will help to think about and propose new frameworks to transition practice.

7. How is confidentiality maintained?

The information derived will be handled by the researcher and university supervisor only. If interviews are recorded this will involve digital recording and files will be kept securely on a computer. Any quotes used will be anonymised. No individuals or schools will be named in any documentation that is published.

8. Why is this study important?

Your participation is highly valued since it is an opportunity to contribute to current and future service delivery around transition for pupils with SEN.

9. What is the duration of the research?

Interviews will take about an hour to an hour and a half. If further information is required this will be discussed and then carried out at your convenience.

10. Where will the interviews be held?

The interviews will be held at school. The brief interview with the pupil will be held at school. Any interviews held with other professionals will take place at their office base or at school. Interviews or questionnaires with parents may take place at school or at home.

11. Will the outcomes of the study be published?

The outcomes will be written up as a doctoral thesis and may be published as a paper for professional journals. The outcomes will also be fed back to the local authority in order to help the authority develop good practice and further services around transition.

Further information:

The researcher has regular contact with children, parents and schools and has undergone a satisfactory criminal records bureau check.

Contact details:

Louise Bason

General Consent Form for Participants in Schools
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Title of Study: What matters in secondary transition? Planning the transition process for students with special educational needs

If you are happy to participate in this study, please read and sign this consent form:

1. I understand the purpose of this study about transition practice and I have the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher for further clarification
2. I understand that my participation in interview is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time
3. I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. If I would not like the researcher to record the interview then I can ask the researcher to take notes instead
4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes in any written or published work resulting from this study
5. I am aware that the data collected will be used in a doctoral thesis and that key findings and outcomes will be used in peer reviewed publications and will inform local authority about current and future practice around transition. I understand that I will not be identified in any documentation that is produced for this purpose.

Name of participant _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 2: Interview schedules

This appendix contains:

- Interview schedule – SENCo/Assistant Head
- Interview schedule – Work-based learning co-ordinator
- Interview schedule – Connexions PA
- Interview schedule – Transition social worker

**Interview questions for Schools (SENCo or other designated staff member)
about Transition Planning for Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

1. General introductory questions:

- a. Considering transition planning to post-school opportunities for students with SEN, what school processes currently exist in relation to this process?
- b. **Mainstream schools only** – Is there any difference between processes for students who have a statement of SEN and those who are on School Action Plus?
- c. Does your school have a transition policy? Or an inclusion policy that includes a focus on transition practice?
- d. Can I confirm that you are the staff member who takes responsibility for co-ordinating transition work for students on the SEN register? Can you tell me more about this role involves?
- e. Does the school curriculum consider any of the following:
 - ☐ Lessons focussed on independence training
E.g. _____
 - ☐ Lessons focussed on emotional development and social skills training
E.g. _____
 - ☐ Lessons focussed on problem solving skills and self-determination
E.g. _____

- Lessons focussed on career preparation and job skills

E.g. _____

2. The transition review process and pupil involvement:

- a. When do you start planning a pupil's transition? Do you have transition-specific reviews? Do these follow a particular format? Why?
- b. What do you value about the transition review process? Why?
- c. How do you organise reviews? Do you inform pupils that they require having a transition review? Do you inform parents that their teenager needs to have a transition review?
- d. Do pupils have the opportunity to attend their transition review? If not or if they choose not to attend, is there anything the school does to obtain/represent the views of the student during the review?

How do you do this in the case of pupils who have limited verbal ability or have other communication difficulties?

How do you do this in the case of pupils with behaviour difficulties? I.e. do you do anything that is different?

- e. What would you consider to be an effective review? Can you identify the facilitators to this? Currently what are the barriers to effective reviews? Why? How can these be overcome?

3. Transition Plan

- a. When a transition review takes place does it produce a transition plan?
What would be considered in this? How often is the transition plan reviewed?
- b. Is there a named person who is responsible for the transition plan and for checking that the actions are followed up?
- c. Is any of the following considered in the transition plan?
 - ☐ Post-16 education courses (e.g. college)
 - ☐ Apprenticeships or vocational courses
 - ☐ Supported employment
 - ☐ Employment opportunities after secondary school
 - ☐ University
- d. How do pupils' aspirations link in with any form of planning engaged in?
- e. What facilitates the development of an appropriate transition plan?
What are the current barriers? Why? How can they be overcome?

4. External service involvement

- a. Which outside agencies /services do you involve and what do they do?
Does involvement depend on a pupil's disability? Is there anything that they don't do which you would like them to do?
- b. Do you access other services or professionals who can help you determine a pupil's potential for further education or employment opportunities? If yes who? And if No, are there any professionals who you think would be well placed to help you with this?
- c. If transition work is a multi-agency matter can you tell me more about how this happens taking a specific young person's case as an example?
(Do you invite external agencies to a pupil's transition review?)
- d. In terms of external services, what facilitates effective transition planning? Why? What are the current barriers you perceive and how can these be overcome?

5. Family involvement

- a. How are parents involved in transition planning?
- b. Do you think that parents know about what transition planning is about?
Who tells them?
- c. What opportunities do parents have to share their views or make requests?

- d. If parents seek information about future opportunities for their child what information does the school have to give them? Is there anywhere else they can go for available information?
- e. Finally, what facilitates family involvement? Are there any barriers you would identify? How can these be overcome?

Interview questions for Work-based learning co-ordinator

1a. Can you describe your role within the secondary school?

1b. How, in your opinion does your role fit in with a student's transition to post-school opportunities?

2a. In your opinion, in what is work-based learning perceived as a valuable aspect of the secondary school curriculum?

2b Can you describe the process whereby students are selected to pursue work-based learning?

2c. Why is work-based learning considered important to these students?

3. Does the work-based curriculum consider any of the following?

☐ Lessons focussed on independence training

E.g. _____

☐ Lessons focussed on emotional development and social skills training

E.g. _____

☐ Lessons focussed on problem solving skills and self-determination

E.g. _____

☐ Lessons focussed on career preparation and job skills

E.g. _____

- 4a. Do you work directly with students with special educational needs (SEN)? [If no, go to Q5]
- b. If yes does this include both students with a Statement of SEN and those students on School Action Plus?
- c. What kind of information would you have about the nature of students' SEN?
- d. How does this information help you in planning work based learning opportunities?
5. What other kind of work experience opportunities are currently available for students with SEN?
- 6a. Do students with SEN have the opportunity to choose from several areas/courses?
- b. If students need help in choosing an area how are they helped?
- c. How does work experience gained then extend to post-16?
- 7a. Which school staff members do you work most closely with? Can you give more information about how this happens?
- b. Which external professionals do you link up with?
8. Do you have meetings with your Connexions Advisor?
- b. Can you describe how your roles could/can link in?
9. Do you attend students' annual reviews at Year 9, 10 or 11? If yes why do you attend?
10. Are you in contact with the students' parents? How do you share information with parents or involve them in planning work based learning? How do you engage parents in this process?
11. Are you involved or linked with any other programmes or initiatives (e.g. any Local Authority initiatives) that may have not been mentioned in other questions?

Interview questions for Connexions Personal Advisor

1. Please describe the role of the Connexions Service and the role of the Connexions Advisor within this service.
2. How did the Connexions service come into existence? Who provided the service before?
3. It is my understanding that Connexions work with all students at transition to post-secondary opportunities, including those identified as having special educational needs. What does it mean to you if a pupil has SEN? Can you tell me the way in which the service differs in the kind of work you do in the case of students with SEN?
4. What is the professional background of a personal advisor?
5. Are personal advisors trained differently to work with students with SEN? What kind of training is given?
6. In your opinion what areas of training are required for Connexions to work with students with SEN? Do you perceive any gaps in the training given currently?
7. In the field we are talking about there is legislation that talks about learning disability from a medically defined deficit model (e.g. the DDA) whereas other legislation (e.g. the 1996 education act) which promotes more of a social inclusion model. Where do Connexions lie? How do Connexions deal with this tension as a service?
8. Is there a difference between the way personal advisors work in a mainstream school and a special school?
9. Who would you work most closely with in a mainstream school? And who would you work most closely with in a special school?
10. Considering the Audit Commission Report 2002 which suggests that Local Authorities reduce statements and allocate funding through other ways, this means that some children with a high level of need won't necessarily have a statement and may be considered at school action plus within the educational system. How does your role fit in with this?
11. Considering a student with a statement of SEN, when they leave school at age 16 or 19 what happens to this statement? What implication/s does having a statement of SEN have in terms of adult services? What about those students who have SEN but do NOT have a statement how are their needs met after they leave school?
12. Which adult services do you work most closely with? Why?
13. Are there professionals or services you would consider important which, currently do not exist or which exist but are not involved in transition work?
14. Are there professionals or services you would like to work with more/less than you do at present?
15. Do you think that adult services in general are currently well resourced in terms of meeting the needs of adolescents and adults with various SEN?

16. With the change in government and the plethora of issues spanning the 14-19 work, how do you perceive your role in the next 5 years? What changes do you think will happen and why?

Interview Questions for Transition social worker

1a. Can you describe your role as Transition Worker?

(Nature of work carried out/assessment work/intervention work)

b. Where do you receive referrals from?

c. Who do you work closely with? - Other professionals? Pupil? Parents?

Can you give examples of joint working?

2. What training did you require to carry out your role?

3a. Do you work with particular groups of adolescents?

Do you carry out direct work with pupils? If yes can you describe this further?

Do you work on any of the following areas?

- i. Post-secondary educational opportunities
- ii. Work and employment
- iii. Leisure
- iv. Social skills, relationships and behaviour
- v. Independence
- vi. Other (please specify)

b. Do you work with pupils from both special and mainstream schools?

c. Can you describe the links you have with schools?

4. How do people e.g. families and professionals know about you?

Appendix 3: The format of the Person-Centred Review (PCR)

PCRs can take various formats. The review observed was a relatively structured design as prescribed by Helen Sanderson Associates. This is the delivery adopted by the Local Authority within which this study was carried out and it is summarised here.

The PCR is characterised by utilising 9 large flipcharts tacked onto the wall and uses coloured pens to write the following information:

Flipchart 1: Who is here?

Flipchart 2: Ground Rules

This included the following aspects: Turning off mobile phones, treating the review as important, stating that there is no such thing as a silly question, no jargon, respecting privacy, spelling mistakes are ok.

Depending on who was facilitating the review, the people present at the review were also asked whether they wanted to add another ground rule.

Flipchart 3: What we like and admire about J (Pupil name)

Flipchart 4: From working with J what do you think is important to J now?

Flipchart 5: What's working? What's not working? (Or what could be better?)

These questions were answered according to:

- Young person's view
- Family view
- School view
- Other's view

Flipchart 6: What is important to J for the future?

Flipchart 7: Help and support to stay healthy and safe

Flipchart 8: Questions to answer

Flipchart 9: Action Plan. The information from the flipcharts contributes to the compilation of an action plan which involves a summary of the action needed, by whom and by when.

All this information is left to the school. The school then collates all information together and calls it a transition plan.

Appendix 4: Parent information

This appendix contains

- Parent Information Sheet
- Consent form for parents

Parent Information Sheet

Dear Parent/s,

I am asking you to take part in a research study about pupils with Special Educational Needs. It looks at how planning for pupils to move from secondary school to beyond takes place. This planning is called “transition planning”.

I have chosen to explore this area because it is an important phase for pupils and their families. The study involves interviews in schools and with parents. A small number of pupils are being followed in more detail.

I would like to involve you in this study to achieve a better understanding of what is important in transition planning for you and your son/daughter.

Please read the following information about important questions that you may have and ask me any further questions if you need clarification.

1. Who will conduct the study?

The study will be conducted by Louise Bason, an Educational Psychologist who works within the local authority. This work is being pursued as part of a doctoral thesis at the University of Manchester.

2. Title of the study

What matters in secondary transition? Planning the transition process for students with special educational needs

3. What is the aim of the study?

The purpose of the study is to explore the way transition planning is currently being carried out in schools and other agencies involved. It aims to identify aspects of good practice in transition 14+ and to identify any gaps or barriers to transition work. Schools, pupils and parents are viewed as key contributors to this study. Information derived could be beneficial towards suggesting future service delivery around transition.

4. Why have I been chosen?

A few cases of pupils who have special educational needs currently in mainstream or special schools need to be selected in order to obtain detailed information about their transition planning processes. Your son or daughter is one of these pupils in Year 9 or above in the secondary school he/she attends and is therefore a possible participant in this study.

5. What would I be asked to do?

The process of participation will involve the following:

- Observation of pupil review and note taking throughout the review
- Interview you as parents
- Obtain information from other professionals or school staff involved
- Access to pupil statement of special educational needs and other relevant information (e.g. professional reports)

6. What happens to the information collected?

The information will be used to achieve an understanding of how transition planning is currently being carried out and what it involves. The information will be added to other information derived from other participants and used to identify good practice as well as gaps. Collective information will help to think about and propose new frameworks to transition practice.

7. How is confidentiality maintained?

The information derived will be handled by the researcher and university supervisor only. If interviews are recorded this will involve digital recording and files will be kept securely on a computer. Any quotes used will be anonymised. No individuals or schools will be named in any reports produced.

8. Why is this study important?

Your involvement is highly valued since it is an opportunity to contribute to current and future service delivery around transition for pupils with special educational needs.

9. What is the duration of the research?

Interviews will take about an hour. Interviews may be held sometime after the pupil review is held, at your convenience.

10. Where will the interviews be held?

The interviews will be completed at school or at your home, depending on your preference. Questionnaires will be given to other professionals at school.

11. Will the outcomes of the study be published?

The outcomes will be written up as a doctoral thesis and may be published as a paper for professional journals. The outcomes will also be fed back to the local authority in order to help the authority develop good practice and further services around transition.

Further information:

The researcher has regular contact with children, parents and schools and has undergone a satisfactory criminal records bureau check.

Contact details:

Louise Bason

Consent Form for Parents

Title of Study: What matters in secondary transition? Planning the transition process for students with special educational needs

If you are happy to participate in this study, please read and sign this consent form:

1. I understand the purpose of this study about transition practice and I have the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher for further clarification
2. I understand that my participation in the interview is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time
3. I understand that if I participate in an interview this may be audio recorded. If I would not like the researcher to record the interview then I can ask the researcher to take notes instead.
4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes in any written or published work resulting from this study
5. I am aware that the data collected will be used in a doctoral thesis and that key findings and outcomes will be used in peer reviewed publications and will inform local authority about current and future practice around transition. I understand that neither I nor my child will be identified in any documentation that is produced for this purpose.

Name of participant _____ Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 5: Observation, interview schedules and questionnaires

This appendix contains

- Review observation schedule
- Parent interview schedule
- Professionals' questionnaire
- Parental questions 6 to 8 months post-review

Case study phase**Review Meeting: Observation Schedule**

- Pupil Code: Year:
- Pupil is on: ☐ Statement of SEN ☐ School Action Plus
- Review type: Person-centred review ☐ Yes ☐ No

People involved in Review:

Person chairing review:

- Pupil present: ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Pupil involvement: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Nature of involvement:

- Parent involvement: ☐ Yes ☐ No

- Transition plan: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Reference to further educational/vocational opportunities:

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Reference to statement objectives or IEP targets

☐ Links between services

☐ New service involvements

☐ Professionals suggested

Barriers	Facilitators

Other interesting points:

Reflections:

Research Project: Planning the transition process for students with
Special Educational Needs in schools

Parent Interview: Case study phase

1. What did you think the purpose of the review meeting was today?
2. Where you given prior information about the meeting? If yes what were you given and by whom?
3. Which professionals or services related to your son/daughter's future planning have you been involved with most recently?
4. Did you know all the people attending the meeting today? If no, who did you not know?
5. How clear do you think the outcomes of this meeting were? Please mark on the following scale:

1 10

Not clear Very clear

6. Which professionals or services will you link up with after this meeting?
7. How clear are you as parents about post-secondary opportunities for your son/daughter? Please mark on the following scale:

1 10

Not clear Very clear

8. Are you working with any of the following?

- ☐ Career advisor within school
- ☐ Connexions
- ☐ Work-based learning co-ordinator within school
- ☐ Social Worker
- ☐ Health professional (e.g. speech & language therapist, occupational therapist)
- ☐ Education professional (e.g. educational psychologist)
- ☐ Special educational needs officer
- ☐ Respite or outreach support
- ☐ Parent Partnership
- ☐ Other: Please specify _____

Comments:

9. What is going well for your son/daughter currently?

10. Are there other things that you would like to achieve as a parent, which are not currently addressed?

Pupil No:	Year:
PCR: Yes/No	
Statement: Yes/No	

Research Project: Planning the transition process for students with
Special Educational Needs in schools

Questionnaire for Professionals

Job title: _____

Agency: _____

1. Provide a brief description of your role in helping young people move from secondary education to beyond

2. What did you think the purpose of this meeting you attended was?

3. Outline your:

- (a) Prior involvement (e.g. with the pupil, school and/or family)

- (b) Current involvement

(c) Future involvement

4. How clear do you think the outcomes of this meeting were? Please mark on the following scale:

<hr/>	
1	10
Not clear	Very clear

5. (a) Please identify one aspect that went well throughout this review meeting

(b) Please identify one aspect that could be improved

6. Which professionals will you link up with after this meeting?

7. (a) In an ideal world are there other things you imagine yourself doing in a case like this?

(b) What are the barriers that prevent you from doing this?

8. Please provide any other comments below. Thank you ☺

Parental questions 6 to 8 months post review

1. Did you receive a copy of the pupil's transition review and action plan after the review?
2. Considering the list of actions agreed at the review have they been carried out since? (Refer to list of actions) Where are things up to?
3. How satisfied are you about being involved in the planning of your son's/daughter's future after secondary school?

1 _____ 10

not satisfied

very satisfied

4. Are there any other concerns that you think should have been considered in the action plan and were not?
5. Has anything additional been done?

Appendix 6: Analytic process – a priori codes and new codes

A priori Codes with information about amendments at data analysis

Short hand code (Atlas Ti)	Code	Meaning
School processes Amended see no.1 & 2 in new codes	School processes related to transition planning for pupils on the SEN register Change to - school processes specific to transition for pupils with a statement & School processes for all pupils not specific to transition	The processes that exist within school that are intended to help pupils with SEN plan for post-school opportunities. Are processes dependent on whether pupils are on school action plus or have a statement? School processes related to transition planning are the Year 9 review for pupils with Statement because Connexions is invited & the parents evening to discuss option choices for all pupils
Existence of a transition policy [retained]	The existence of a school policy about transition planning	The existence of a transition policy or an inclusion policy that includes reference to transition for pupils with SEN.
No transition policy [deleted]	The school does not have a transition policy	The school does not have a policy that makes reference to transition for pupils with SEN.
Responsibility for transition planning	A staff member is responsible for overseeing transition	There is a staff member within the school, possibly the SENCo,

Amended see no. 26 new codes	planning for pupils with SEN	who has the responsibility of co-ordinating transition planning.
No person responsible for transition planning [deleted]	No specific staff member is responsible for overseeing transition planning for pupils with SEN	There is no identified staff member who has the designated responsibility of co-ordinating transition planning for pupils with SEN.
Curriculum areas that focus on transition-related skills Amended see no. 34 in new codes	Curriculum areas specifically focussed on the pupil's adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills	The curriculum addresses the following core areas:- Independence skills; social skills; problem-solving and self-determination skills;
Gaps related to the school curriculum [retained]	Gaps in curriculum areas that specifically focus on the pupil's adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills	The curriculum is limited in addressing independence skills; social skills; problem-solving and self-determination skills
Gaps related to career preparation and job skills [retained]	Lack of focus on career preparation and job skills within the curriculum	The curriculum does not focus on the concept of career development and job preparation for pupils with SEN.
Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review (9 & 10 are linked)	There is clarity or ambiguity around the delivery of a Year 9 review meeting that focuses on transition with a Transition Plan as an outcome	According to the code of practice the school should organise a Year 9 annual review for pupils with a statement. This specifically starts to consider transition needs and goals within the development of a transition

		plan which is then subsequently reviewed.
No transition plan within Year 9 review [retained]	The pupil's Year 9 review does not include the initiation of a transition plan	The pupil's Year 9 review fails to incorporate a transition plan which is subsequently reviewed at the next review.
Pupil participation Amended see no.32	Active participation of the young person in the annual review and transition planning process within.	The young person participates in the review process and his/her views are included. The inclusion of the pupil in the process of their own transition has been identified as a main indicator of good practice in the literature.
Pupil attends review but limited participation [retained]	Passive participation from pupil in review and in relation to their transition planning	The pupil is present at the review but the young person's views are not really included within the review process. The pupil cannot be seen to be an active participant.
Pupil views are obtained before the review process Amended see no.38	Pupil involvement is sought through documents which gather the views of the pupil before the review process	School staff would have gained pupil's views and contribution prior to the review process as part of transition planning
Barriers to effective reviews (schools) Amended see no. 41	Barriers to review process that can have an impact on outcome according to schools	What are the barriers to effective reviews from the schools' perspective?
Facilitators to effective reviews (schools)	Facilitators/helpful aspects of effective reviews according to	What makes a review effective from the school's perspective?

Amended see no. 42	schools	
Vocational opportunities & FE preparation Amended see no. 35	Preparation for further education and/or vocational opportunities	There are clear options and pathways available to pupils within school, including vocational opportunities and FE and transition planning work is reflective of this.
Transition key worker [retained]	A transition co-ordinator or key worker who is responsible for a pupil's transition plan and who follows up actions	There is a named co-ordinator or key worker who has responsibility for the pupil's transition plan and to check that actions decided within reviews are carried out
External service involvement Amended see no. 36	Multi-agency involvement to meet the transition needs of pupils	All agencies/services required by the pupil are involved within transition planning. This includes collaborations between school and external services.
Clarity of roles across services [retained]	Do services/agencies involved have clear roles and responsibilities?	Is there clarity of roles across multi-agency working?
Service continuity at transition [retained]	External service involvement extends from children to adult services	There are clear links and communication channels between children services and adult services amongst the various agencies/services that are involved
Contents of transition plan Amended see no. 43	What is considered within a pupil's transition plan?	Contents of a transition plan. Does the transition plan include consideration of post-16 college courses,

		apprenticeships, supported employment or other employment opportunities, higher education?
Links between pupil aspirations and planning Amended – see no.15 &16	The way in which pupil aspirations link in with transition planning	The way in which transition planning considers the pupil’s aspirations and motivations
Barriers to developing a transition plan (schools) Amended – see no. 22	Barriers to the consideration of a transition plan within school	What are the barriers to the development of an appropriate transition plan for a pupil with SEN within school?
Access to professionals (school) [deleted & replaced by 36 a & b in new codes]	Access to professionals who can provide assessment information relevant to transition post-16	Schools seek to involve professionals who can help them with the provision of assessments and recommendations at transition post-16
Barriers to the involvement of external services [deleted & replaced by 19 a & b]	Factors that hinder the involvement of external services/agencies with pupils and schools	Factors that act as barriers to the involvement and collaboration between schools and external services
Facilitators to external service involvement [retained]	Factors that assist the involvement of external services/agencies	Factors that assist the involvement and collaboration between schools and external services
Family involvement Amended see no. 46	Parental involvement in transition planning processes	Parents/carers are actively involved in transition planning

Information for parents [retained]	Availability of information about transition and transition planning to parents	Parents/carers have the required information about transition and they know about the sources of information
Barriers to family involvement [retained]	Factors that interfere with the involvement and liaison with parents	Factors that act as barriers to the partnership between schools and families and schools and external services

Codes added and refined during Data Analysis

Short hand code	Code	Meaning
<p>a. School processes related to transition planning (mainstream)</p> <p>b. School processes related to transition planning (special)</p> <p>School processes for pupils with a statement</p>	<p>School processes for all pupils. That is processes not specific to pupils with SEN in mainstream schools.</p> <p>School processes related to transition planning within special schools</p> <p>School processes specific to pupils with SEN who have a statement</p>	<p>School processes that take place for all the pupil population. These may not be explicitly related to transition planning.</p> <p>Things that special school do in relation to transition planning</p> <p>School processes that are specific to pupils who have a Statement of SEN</p>
<p>a. Role of Connexions (as perceived by mainstream school)</p> <p>b. Role of Connexions (as perceived by special school)</p>	<p>Role of Connexions as perceived by the school</p>	<p>The role of Connexions with pupils including those with and without a Statement of SEN for mainstream</p> <p>The role of Connexions for pupils within special school</p>
<p>Work-based learning for pupils at school action plus</p>	<p>Pupils at school action plus may be supported via the work-based learning pathway</p>	<p>Pupils at school action plus who may find the transition from Key Stage 3 to 4 difficult may be supported by the school's vocational work-based learning co-ordinator – whose decision?</p>

Curriculum flexibility in mainstream school	Curriculum flexibility to accommodate the individual needs of the pupil	
Decisions about option pathways at Year 9	Information about how pathways for pupils are selected	Information about how pupils are guided into the various option pathways at Year 9
Lack of clarity about externally organised initiatives	Lack of clarity about the content of externally organised initiatives and activities for pupils with SEN	There is lack of clarity and information about what actually constitutes externally organised initiatives and activities for pupils with SEN such as Aiming Higher events
<p>a. Meaning of transition: Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 transition</p> <p>b. Meaning of transition: Focus on delivering PCRs</p> <p>c. Meaning of transition: external service involvement for post-secondary options</p>	<p>The meaning of transition in mainstream schools</p> <p>The meaning of transition in special schools</p> <p>The meaning of transition in special schools</p>	<p>The transition from KS 3 to KS 4 as differentiated from transition to post-16</p> <p>The organisation and delivery of a PCR which is carried out from Year 12. This includes a focus on involving external services for post-school support</p> <p>The involvement of external services in view of post-secondary destinations</p>
Value of review process (mainstream)		What SENCos' value in the regular review process

Awareness of different review formats	There is knowledge of different review formats	The SENCo is aware of the different review formats and delivery
Variability of SEN population	The various types of SEN needs within a school	The variability of types of SEN within mainstream & special school
a. Roles within school (mainstream) b. Roles within schools (special)	The roles of school staff related to transition, other than the SENCo	The various roles of school staff who have some connection with transition work. This does not include the SENCo or assistant head
Planning for employment		Planning that involves employment opportunities post-16
Tracking of pupil destinations post-16		Keeping track of where pupils go after they leave secondary school
a. School staff aspirations (mainstream) b. School staff aspirations (special)	The aspirations held by school staff for the pupils in their schools	Where these aspirations different across mainstream and special schools?
Quality of links between pupil aspirations and planning	The existence of a link between pupil aspirations and planning	To what extent does transition planning include pupil aspirations? Is there a link?
Facilitators of transition planning	The features that help transition planning for pupils with SEN	This code is for both mainstream and special schools

Confusion around transition planning and statement objectives	There is confusion around transition planning and statement objectives and how these are documented	This confusion can be a barrier to developing an appropriate transition plan
a. Difficulties with external services (mainstream) b. Difficulties with external services (special)		The difficulties experienced with involving external services/ professionals or with service provision
Lack of information sharing amongst professionals	The lack of communication and sharing of information amongst professionals	This includes professionals within the same service or agency e.g. health
Statement promotes inclusion and transition planning		Having a statement of SEN promotes the pupil's inclusion in mainstream and the chance of having more planning around transition
a. Barriers to transition planning (mainstream) b. Barriers to transition planning (special)	The barriers to transition planning	What are the barriers to transition planning including the development of an appropriate transition plan
Planning for Higher Education		Processes that indicate planning for higher education opportunities
Concerns about continuity of support at college/other post-secondary destinations		The concerns about support continuing into FE or other post-16 provision

Transition co-ordinator for Year 7 vs. Transition for post-16	Transition co-ordinator for Year 7 but no specific transition co-ordinator within school for planning for post-16	The school has a designated transition co-ordinator responsible for the primary to secondary transition but no specific designated transition co-ordinator for transition planning at post-16
a. Responsibility for/lack of responsibility for transition planning (mainstream) b. Responsibility for transition planning (special)	Information relating to who is responsible for the transition planning of pupils with SEN	Looking at aspects that indicate responsibility or lack of responsibility for the transition planning of pupils with SEN
Pupils at school action plus of the SEN register		Processes related to pupils at school action plus (i.e. without a Statement of SEN)
Training needs of staff		Identified training needs of staff
Areas for potential development	Those areas or aspects of services that may be new or that may need further developments	This may include links to facilitators of transition planning
a. Work experience (mainstream) b. Work experience (special)	Information related to work experience opportunities	This does not include information about the work-based learning option pathway
Concern about changing statement objectives	There are concerns around the process of changing a	Concerns around the process between schools and LA to

	pupil's statement objectives	change statement objectives
a. Pupil participation (mainstream) b. Pupil participation (special)	The school gives information about pupil participation	The school gives information about how the pupil is involved in processes related to transition planning, including their review process
PCR vs. Regular annual review	Identified characteristics related to PCR that contrast to regular annual review	Characteristics identified by participants
a. Curriculum areas that focus on transition-related skills (mainstream) b. Curriculum areas that focus on transition-related skills	Curriculum areas that specifically focus on the pupil's adaptive behaviour and self-determination skills	The curriculum addresses the following core areas: Independence skills; social skills; problem-solving and self-determination skills
a. Vocational education & FE preparation in mainstream b. Vocational education & FE preparation in special schools	Preparation for FE and/or vocational education opportunities	There are clear options and pathways available to pupils within school, including vocational opportunities and FE and transition planning is reflective of this
a. External service involvement (mainstream) b. External service involvement (special)	External multi-agency involvement to meet the transition needs of pupils	Agencies/services required, external to the school are involved in transition planning. It involves collaboration between school and the service.
Emotional factors around	The existence of emotional factors around transition	

transition	from secondary school	
<p>a. Pupil views are obtained before the review process (mainstream)</p> <p>b. Pupils views are obtained before the review process (special)</p>	Pupil involvement is sought through documents which gather the views of the pupil before the review	School staff work with pupils around transition planning and gain their views prior to the review process
Features of PCRs	Features of PCRs identified by participants	This includes practical aspects of PCRs.
Tensions related to PCRs	Aspects that pointed to tensions related to PCRs expressed by participants	Tensions include dissatisfaction with some aspect of PCRs
<p>a. Barriers to effective reviews (mainstream)</p> <p>b. Barriers to effective reviews (special)</p>	Barriers to the review process that can have an impact on outcome	The barriers to effective reviews from the schools' perspective
<p>a. Facilitators to effective reviews (mainstream)</p> <p>b. Facilitators to effective reviews (special)</p>	Helpful aspects that make reviews more effective	The features that make reviews effective from the schools' perspective
<p>a. Contents of transition plan (mainstream)</p> <p>b. Contents of transition plan (special)</p>	What is considered within a pupil's transition plan?	Contents of a transition plan. Does the transition plan include consideration of post-secondary college courses, apprenticeships, supported/other employment opportunities and higher education?

Future opportunities/ destinations considered (special)	The post-secondary options considered for pupils within special schools	These include FE, apprenticeships, leisure etc.
College links	Links between school and college	This is relevant for both mainstream and special schools
a. Family involvement (mainstream) b. Family involvement (special)	Parental/carers involvement in transition planning	Parents/carers are involved in transition planning processes
Transition plan vs. Action plan (special)	The development of a pupil transition plan or development of actions	Distinguishing between having a specific transition plan for a pupil or just merely having an identified list of actions
a. Interesting (mainstream) b. Interesting (special)	Interesting information relevant to mainstream schools Interesting information relevant to special schools	Interesting information that could benefit from further reflection Interesting information that could benefit from further reflection
Role of Connexions and the PA (as perceived by PA)	The role of Connexions service and Connexions Personal Advisor	As perceived by the Connexions PA
Backgrounds of Connexions Pas	The background training and experience of Connexions PAs	As detailed by Connexions PA

Organisational structure of Connexions	The organisational structure of Connexions	The way in which Connexions Services are organised
Tensions related to Connexions	Tensions/difficulties related to the delivery of the Connexions Service	
Working relationship between schools & Connexions	The working relationship between schools and Connexions	The nature of the working model between schools and Connexions as external services
Training needs/developments – Connexions (related to no. 57)	The training needs of Connexions PAs and training development pursued	Areas that have been identified as training needs by Connexions
Connexions & SEN/LDD assessments	Connexions understanding of and role in SEN/LDD assessments	This is linked to no. 56 roles of Connexions
Restricted post-16 training opportunities (identified by Connexions)	Restricted post-16 training opportunities for young people with SEN as identified by Connexions PAs	This is particularly related to employment and apprenticeships opportunities. It links in with no. 51
Potential role for EP in transition work	The potential role of educational psychologists in transition planning work	The potential role for educational psychologists in transition as identified by others

Annual review documentation & other pupil information	Annual review documentation & other pupil information provided by schools	This includes information provided for transition planning to external or post-secondary settings (linked to no. 18)
Multi-agency working	Information relevant to multi-agency working	Includes examples of multi-agency response or work
Transition social worker	Specific transition role for transition post-16	The role of transition worker within the social care team
CS Purpose of PCR (parents SS)	The purpose of the PCR as identified by parents of pupils attending special school	CS – derived from case study analysis of data
CS Preparation for PCR (parents)	Information and preparation given to parents before the PCR	CS – derived from case study analysis of data
CS Contact with services (parents SS)	The services/professionals that parents of pupils in <u>special schools</u> have been involved with	This relates to services and/or professionals directly related to their son/daughter
CS Features of PCRs (parents)	Features of the PCR process as identified by parents	This included focus on the facilitators of the PCR
CS Difficulties identified by parents	Difficulties related to transition work and planning as identified by parents of both pupils in special and mainstream schools	This code incorporates analysis from all data elicited from parent interview but difficulties with aspects of the PCR are differentiated out separately

CS Difficulties identified by parents about PCRs	Difficulties about aspects of PCRs as identified by parents	Difficulties related to PCR are differentiated from though related to transition planning
CS Positive experiences identified by parents (SS)	Positive aspects related to their son/daughters experiences (in special schools)	Things that are going well for the pupils attending special schools
CS Needs identified by parents (SS)	Needs identified by parents of pupils in special schools	This code incorporates analysis from all data derived from parent interviews
CS Purpose of regular review (parents MS)	The purpose of the regular review within mainstream school as identified by parents of pupils attending mainstream school	CS – derived from case study analysis of data
CS Preparation for regular review	Information and way in which parents were prepared for the regular review	
CS Contact with services (parents MS)	The services/professionals that parents of pupils in <u>mainstream schools</u> have been involved with	This relates to services and/or professionals directly related to their son/daughter
CS Positive experiences identified by parents (MS)	Positive aspects related to their son/daughters experiences (in mainstream schools)	Things that are going well for the pupils attending mainstream schools
CS Needs identified by parents (MS)	Needs identified by parents of pupils in mainstream school	

Total 93 new codes and 11 a priori codes

Appendix 7: Example of coding

The first screen shot shows an example of single coding using Atlas TI and the second screen shot shows an example of overlapping codes, illustrating multiple meanings assigned to the same comment.

223 S: Hmm...Obviously we spoke about the Educational Psychology input before. I do recognise that it would be helpful. More time with EP's even in general conversation about support needs. Again maybe for selfish reasons but it is important stuff, because of the lack of consistency in the information we get from schools. I do have links with the SEN team in the LA and I have told them that I would like to see pupil's documents...or

224 L: Do you mean the pupil's statement? Wouldn't the SENCo show you that if you are involved with a pupil?

225 S: Yes the statement. You may get a snippet of it within the annual review document but it is certainly not consistent to get a full copy of a statement...but then the statement is last reviewed at year 9 at best aren't they?

226 L: Yes

227 S: So then it is also about obtaining the most current information and annual review reports.

228 L: and the role of the annual review is to update or change anything from the statement including the statement objectives. So from what you are saying you do not always get information about the statement of SEN.

229 S: and it is about getting a wealth of information to help draw salient points for the 139a. So in answer to the question about which other agencies I would like to have more involvement with, I think I will have to see how we can work more closely with the authority. But I think there is a national process starting off there already because the LA took on a commissioning role for Connexions so in time I think that will become better.

230 L15: Do you think that adult services in general are currently well resourced in terms of meeting the needs of adolescents and adults with various SEN?

231 S: My observation is no they are not. As I said making referrals can take a long time, as well as getting anyone allocated. Social services are not as resourced as they should be.

232 L16: We come to the last question now. With the change in government and the plethora of

Annual review documentation & other pupil information

Annual review documentation & other pupil information

Areas for potential development

Difficulties with external services (special)

007

008 Q: Specifically with or without a statement

009

010 A: Right, we have obviously our SEN register which identifies those youngsters who are on school action, school action plus and who have a statement and all of our staff are aware of which children are on the register. In relation to planning for year 9 transition, Key stage3 to Key stage 4 we actually have a member of leadership who has responsibility around the pathways the children can be directed on in relation to option choices

011

012 Q: Right

013

014 A: and we have a lot of planning that goes into those pathways. There is a parents evening that is devoted to the year 9 Key stage 3 into Key stage 4, year 10 and &11. The parents evening looks very much at those pathways and there are key staff available who can talk to parents about which pathways their children will be going on and if they have any concerns about those pathways, whether or not they are happy with those pathways choices. By pathway choices I mean that there are some young people who, because of their particular needs may need to go via a route that will give them some additional support, around Functional skills for e.g., say literacy and numeracy

015

016 Q: Ok so how many pathways do you have?

U17

U18 A: There are three pathways

U19

☀ School processes related to transition planning (mainstream)

☀ Decisions about option pathways at Year 9

☀ Meaning of transition: Key Stage 3 to Ke

☀ School processes related to transition planning (mainstream)

☀ Meaning of transition: Key Stage 3 to Ke

☀ Decisions about option pathways at Year 9

☀ Family involvement (mainstream)

Appendix 8: Data assigned to codes

Report: 8 quotation(s) for 1 code

HU: Transition

File: [C:\Users\Louise\Documents\D.Ed.Psych\Thesis\Data Folder\Transition.hpr5]

Edited by: L Bason

Mode: quotation list names and references

Quotation-Filter: All

Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review

P 1: A Entire Interview.doc - 1:45 [you mentioned the year 9 review..] (151:153) (L Bason)

Codes: [Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review]

No memos

Q: you mentioned the year 9 reviews, when you focus on transition aspects, do these follow any particular formats at the moment?

A: yes they follow the format from the LA, so you would have a statement, a review of their statement and you would have the transition plan that accompanies the statement and within the transition plan you would be looking at the youngsters needs, what their future needs would be at key stage 4. Then also depending on the youngster, what they feel and what you feel would be happening post year 9 really.

P 1: A Entire Interview.doc - 1:49 [I don't find the transition pl..] (270:274) (L Bason)

Codes: [Barriers to transition planning (mainstream)] [Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review]

No memos

A: I don't find the transition plan that we currently have as very helpful in terms of the areas that it looks at, but as far as an action plan is concerned, I think there is too much duplication within the format that we have. I think it could be linked much more closely to the statement, rather than the statement review paperwork rather than having two sets of documentation

Q: so at the moment you have two sets.

A: two sets you have the statement review documentation and you have a transition plan. I would like to see one A4 sheet that it almost an action plan similar to what you would have for the CAF. That would be attached to the statement, because what you are really looking at is the annual review that is giving you the update of the child's additional need or special need, the objectives, you've got the objectives and the progress linked with the objectives and the strategies. So as far as the transition plan, you are really looking at is how that links in to the transition from key stage 3 to key stage 4 and things around the option choices that a young person makes and what they may be thinking of following on from key stage 4. That is very difficult for anyway for young people to make those sorts of choices and decisions, but it is around what within the action plan you really ask how the child is going to be supported for example you would be looking at the involvement of the personal advisors from connexions, how the TA would be helping that young person, how the progress leaders would be working with those young people and our own careers advisor within the centre for learning.

P 1: A Entire Interview.doc - 1:58 [the majority of the actions tend..] (310:310) (L Bason)

Codes: [Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review] [Contents of transition plan (mainstream)]

No memos

The majority of the actions tend to be school based actions anyway, because they are around options the youngster follows, whether they are looking at the alternative collegiate type programme, linking in with for example, P who is our work based manager.

P 1: A Entire Interview.doc - 1:69 [drawing up the plan? Well it w..] (294:294) (L Bason)

Codes: [Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review] [Meaning of transition: Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 transition]

No memos

Drawing up the plan? Well it would be for example if I was, I'm the SENCo or a colleague would be looking at drawing up that and linking it in with the review and then using that transition plan for year 9 to look back at it in year 10, and trying to link the year 9 with the year 10 and subsequent reviews.

P 2: C.doc - 2:28 [So from what you were saying b..] (111:113) (L Bason)

Codes: [Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review] [Confusion between transition planning and statement objectives]

No memos

Q. So from what you were saying before you would start planning for a pupil's transition, you mentioned year 9 but more in terms of statement reviews and options. So currently you basically do your year 9 reviews and you follow the statement objectives and you don't focus specifically on transition issues for students with special needs?

A: Not that I am aware of but I might be doing the Connexions service a injustice as I am not sure the structure their meetings take, how they work you know, but I do know that they do a lot of research around their special needs before they become involved

P 2: C.doc - 2:45 [Is there any attempt to have s..] (173:175) (L Bason)

Codes: [Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review]

No memos

Q. Is there any attempt to have some form of a plan that includes a transition plan in the end of that?

A: I personally do not think that there is...but again I might be doing the Connexions service an injustice there.

P 3: H.doc - 3:61 [Q: ok and with respect to tran..] (359:361) (L Bason)

Codes: [Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review]

No memos

Q: ok and with respect to transition planning, since we were discussing your typical annual review process, from what you have been telling me, you may discuss some aspects about transition planning (in this case at year 9 is about what options there are in preparation for the future) but it is not really that explicit it seems to me currently in your review process

A: No...Right

P 3: H.doc - 3:62 [Q: Would maybe connexions try ..] (363:365) (L Bason)

Codes: [Clear vs. ambiguous transition planning in Year 9 review] [Role of Connexions (as perceived by mainstream school)]

No memos

Q: Would maybe connexions try to include anything about that in the review?

A: No...Connexions will meet up with a child in year 9 they ask me, and it is not just the statemented children but they do start with the statemented pupils and they sort of ask me for a list of children. So they, Connexions will have meetings with the children and I do mention it at the annual reviews but it is not specific about transition. We ask them what options they want to pick, if there are any issues or if they want to go to college

Report: 5 quotation(s) for 1 code

HU: Transition

File: [C:\Users\Louise\Documents\D.Ed.Psych\Thesis\Data Folder\Transition.hpr5]

Edited by: L Bason

Mode: quotation list names and references

Quotation-Filter: All

Meaning of transition: External service involvement for post-secondary destinations

P 4: Special.doc - 4:8 [So besides the review as such,..] (16:17)

Codes: [External service involvement (special)] [Meaning of transition: External service involvement for post-secondary destinations]

No memos

Q: So besides the review as such, as a school would you do other things that are associated with transition planning before that time comes?

A: They work with Connexions. They have a Connexions interview. So their ideas about where they want to go after they leave school could be taken into account.

P 4: Special.doc - 4:124 [Connexions and at the Year 12 ..] (233:233)

Codes: [Meaning of transition: External service involvement for post-secondary destinations]

No memos

Connexions and at the Year 12 review then there would be the children's social worker there and there would also be the adult care manager though that person may not have been always identified.

P 5: Special.doc - 5:8 [In a review you will be saying..] (7:7)

Codes: [Meaning of transition: External service involvement for post-secondary destinations]

No memos

In a review you will be saying you have 2 years from this point, are Adult Social Services involved? Have you been allocated an Adult or Transition Social Worker? Do you have a social worker? Because some students may not have a social worker even at this point, if they have not gone through the children's team. They may have never had a social worker so they may not be aware that once they get to 19 and they leave school they may need a

social worker to flag up post-school opportunities outside of education. So at 16 we would start to talk about this, we would know basically...and we would be saying that we need to make a referral to social services.

P 5: Special.doc - 5:9 [Q: The role of the social work..] (10:11)

Codes: [External service involvement (special)] [Meaning of transition: External service involvement for post-secondary destinations]

No memos

Q: The role of the social worker then is to explore opportunities outside education

A: And also to do a care plan, a person-centred plan to say what needs does this youngster have? This begins at Year 12. At Year 13, they will be 18 years and we would be looking to see that a social worker is in place, that they have made contact and that a personal care plan is being compiled for the young person. Connexions and college is also involved in all of this...

P 5: Special.doc - 5:102 [Don't forget once they leave h..] (218:218)

Codes: [Meaning of transition: External service involvement for post-secondary destinations]

No memos

Don't forget once they leave here it is from 19 years to death, it's not like age 2 to 19, and a time limited opportunity. Commissioning services post 19 has got to be forever. So you have to get it right for that young person and be able to afford it so commissioning service, being able to future-proof is a vital component for our youngsters really.

Appendix 9: Interpretation of codes by coder 2 in the inter-coder reliability check

Code	Coder 2 Quotations	Coder 2 reflections
Areas for potential development	<p>It just was something we hadn't thought of. We had our systems in place and it wasn't something that students were a central part of even though the review was about them. It has changed our way at looking at things. L. So in a way being a part of the pilot for person-centred reviews has helped you see how things could be done differently. It has been an area of development. S. Yes it has. We thoroughly enjoyed being part of the pilot and it does make you see things in a slightly different way.</p> <p>L. Any ideas how you could overcome that? S. No because we are still working through how these reviews are best placed. Is it best to do them in a block where we identify one week and they are all held in that week with morning and afternoon sessions or are they best kept for say one Monday afternoon and again the following week and so on till we work through. We haven't really worked out which is the best system. For the pilot they were blocked because that suited everybody who was involved at the time.</p>	<p>Being in the pilot helped the special schools reflect on their systems for transition and started a system of development to become more person centred.</p>
Barriers to effective reviews (special schools)	<p>Yeah. We were involved in the pilot scheme so we were selective in the number of students we could involve. This year we are rolling it out to more students so student numbers have gone up. So it may be that external agencies cannot commit that amount of time. If we are running 10 reviews rather than 5 they may say 'sorry I can come to this review and that review but I'm not available for the other one'.</p> <p>How are parents involved in transition planning by the school? S. That could be identified as an issue because in the first time we were involved in the pilot the facilitator took time to go and meet with</p>	<p>Resources are tight, particularly as more students are included in the process. The lack of time from within school limits the degree to which parents can be involved. The lack of time from external services limits the amount of multiagency involvement.</p> <p>External (additional) personnel may solve the problem from the schools perspective –</p>

	<p>the family and talk to the family. It was quite a big commitment. It did not happen last year because we involved more students and you cannot expect facilitators to find time in their busy lives to do that.</p> <p>I have met with R and explained what we did in the previous 2 years. The first year the facilitator got involved with the families and the second year Chris put together a presentation. This year it is still very much up in the air. The second year transition review parents will be aware of what the process is, the first year transition parents really won't. If we could have the stuff from C it would be wonderful because it would save me a job. Getting my head round to put it all down to have something I can then pass on to parents, it is a big job really.</p> <p>L. Is there anyone else that can help you with that? Does it have to be the SEN Officer? S. It needs to be somebody who knows about the process. I cannot really think, because the social workers are not going to have time. The people who were trained as facilitators and are aware of the process are the SEN Officers, from the schools there is mainly myself, M and C. The social workers are going to say they cannot because of caseloads. Connexions...they would perhaps be someone who we could look at. I have also asked if we could have C's stuff so at least we have something to work on.</p>	<p>but this brings new difficulties in that external personnel do not know the PCR process well enough or may not be trained.</p> <p>(This code overlaps with the next code)</p>
Barriers to transition planning (special)	<p>They come. I don't know what it is. Whether it is the personal invitation from the student or whether people now do understand transition reviews. But they do come, whereas for an ordinary annual review I find it very difficult to get all the right people in one place.</p> <p>S. Hmm...The key worker issue we discussed before. I actually do keep a check on it here but it may not always be possible to do that. You may find 12 months down the line that nothing has moved on</p>	<p>PCR encourages greater participation at the initial planning meeting than a standard review. Time is an issue for school staff and other agencies.</p> <p>However, maintaining commitment after the meeting is difficult. A potential solution is to involve the school staff</p>

	<p>because that person has not been actively involved and has not helped things to move on.</p> <p>S. Yes. We wouldn't but you can see that it could happen. Just discussing it through with you now and you may find that for other schools. It could be a major issue if it is not a member of staff from the school that has been identified as key worker. I think also, the length of time that is needed...it is not too bad for us here because I do actually build in an afternoon for each and every review but you may see that in some schools to be able to give an hour to an hour and a half is going to be a major issue for them.</p> <p>S. If it is in the school day it is about having to make an hour and a half for a review if you do it after school it could then be a staffing issue because of the support staff's day. They are only employed until a certain time, so would they stay that extra time?</p> <p>Yeah. We were involved in the pilot scheme so we were selective in the number of students we could involve. This year we are rolling it out to more students so student numbers have gone up. So it may be that external agencies cannot commit that amount of time. If we are running 10 reviews rather than 5 they may say 'sorry I can come to this review and that review but I'm not available for the other one'.</p> <p>I have met with R and explained what we did in the previous 2 years. The first year the facilitator got involved with the families and the second year C put together a presentation. This year it is still very much up in the air. The second year transition review parents will be aware of what the process is, the first year transition parents really won't. If we could have the stuff from C it would be wonderful because it would save me a job. Getting my head round to put it all down to have something I can then pass on to parents, it</p>	<p>as the key worker.</p> <p>The amount of time needed prior to the meeting to properly involve other people is an issue.</p> <p>There may be some economy of scale by developing materials that have been used in previous PCRs</p>
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	<p>is a big job really.</p> <p>L. Is there anyone else that can help you with that? Does it have to be the SEN Officer? S. It needs to be somebody who knows about the process. I cannot really think, because the social workers are not going to have time. The people who were trained as facilitators and are aware of the process are the SEN Officers, from the schools there is mainly myself, M and C. The social workers are going to say they cannot because of caseloads. Connexions...they would perhaps be someone who we could look at. I have also asked if we could have C's stuff so at least we have something to work on.</p>	
College links	<p>L. Do you access other services or professionals who can help you determine a pupil's potential for further education or other opportunities? S. Yes. The local college will come along. We tend to stick with the local college because it has to be the first port of call. Social services will get involved in funding if students want to go further afield. So we always make sure and see whether the local college can meet a student's needs before we look elsewhere.</p> <p>L. Is there a specific person you would liaise with from the college? S. Yes though it could change. The person from college will be responsible for matching potential students with college courses. She also considers certain issues such as if a student needed to be assisted with feeding or helped with toileting, it would then be her role to make the college aware of what the student's needs would be.</p>	Local and more distant links are established through professional networks.
Difficulties with external services (special)	<p>They come. I don't know what it is. Whether it is the personal invitation from the student or whether people now do understand transition reviews. But they do come, whereas for an ordinary annual review I find it very difficult to get all the right people in one place.</p>	It is difficult for schools to get all of the professionals that they need, but PCRs were more successful than ordinary reviews in the pilot phase.

	<p>Yeah. We were involved in the pilot scheme so we were selective in the number of students we could involve. This year we are rolling it out to more students so student numbers have gone up. So it may be that external agencies cannot commit that amount of time. If we are running 10 reviews rather than 5 they may say 'sorry I can come to this review and that review but I'm not available for the other one'.</p>	
Facilitators of transition planning	<p>L. and is that [timing] perceived as a good thing by parents as well? S. Yes, because then it could also be an issue for them if they have other children at home and you are doing it after school. An hour and a half can be a long time.</p> <p>S. Connexions and at the Year 12 review then there would be the children's social worker there and there would also be the adult care manager though that person may not have been always identified. If the children's social worker is on the ball that would be already in place so you get the two attending. L. So the social worker is identified as a key person and do all your families have a social worker? S. Yes they do.</p> <p>L. Do you access other services or professionals who can help you determine a pupil's potential for further education or other opportunities? S. Yes. The local college will come along. We tend to stick with the local college because it has to be the first port of call. Social services will get involved in funding if students want to go further afield. So we always make sure and see whether the local college can meet a student's needs before we look elsewhere.</p> <p>L. Is there a specific person you would liaise with from the college? S. Yes though it could change. The person from college will be responsible for matching potential</p>	<p>Having the meeting in school time is helpful to parents who have other children. Pre-meetings to pass on information about the process is taken up by just under half of the parents.</p> <p>It is helpful when the key people from both children's services and adult services can attend as well as college personnel. This enables a link between those who currently know the YP and those who will work with the YP in the future to be established as part of the planning process. The school attempts to manage this on perceived need.</p> <p>(This code overlaps with the next code)</p>

	<p>students with college courses. She also considers certain issues such as if a student needed to be assisted with feeding or helped with toileting, it would then be her role to make the college aware of what the student's needs would be.</p> <p>L. Are there any other professionals who could be well placed to help you in the future? S. I think we have already identified the core that I need there. I will ask others as they would be needed.</p> <p>L. In terms of external services, what has been an aspect that facilitated good transition planning? S. I think it is what I said before that they turn up.</p> <p>What happened last year was that C (facilitator) got the parents together and explained the process. L. Do you think that was a good idea? S. We did not have a good turnout. We held it at E; we had 5 parents turn up from about 12.</p>	
Facilitators to effective reviews (special)	<p>S. I think that would be working through the booklet with the students, because they are very focussed then. They have thought about what contribution they want to make, where they want to go and what the next step is for them. Our students all have a learning difficulty and cannot think fast. Put on the spot in a review they would be unable to do that. L. Would a support assistant helping them out with this process help? S. It does not have to be a support assistant or a person but having had the opportunity before the review to focus and think about things that are important to them now and maybe other things they would like to develop. Good preparation is important.</p> <p>S. We do our reviews during the day. We always have built time during the day to do our reviews.</p> <p>S. That they turn up. Attendance really. I must admit that anything that...if for example we'd be looking for the young</p>	<p>Allocating staff time to obtaining pupil views prior to the PCR is helpful for special school pupils.</p> <p>The school is able to allocate resources to the conducting of the PCR.</p> <p>Having key professionals attend increase the likelihood of accessing resources.</p>

	<p>person to can get involved in after school activities, if the social worker has been at the review, it has happened that the young person has then been put on the waiting list for the various after-school groups that social services run.</p>	
Family involvement (special)	<p>S. It could. I have asked R (SEN Officer) if she is still in contact with C to see if he could let us have a copy of the presentation he put together. He had done paper work so that parents could come, watch the presentation, tea and coffee, take away the paper work and get back to himself or the schools if there was anything they were uncertain of. The paperwork would save us a lot of work.</p> <p>Do you think that parents know what transition planning is about and who tells them? S. No L. So from what you are saying if it weren't for one person to take the initiative to give a presentation to parents they would not know. No one is doing that at the moment. S. No.</p>	Parental involvement had been facilitated by external personnel and without this resource there is no plan to continue to engage parents.
Features of PCRs		(All subsumed under other headings)
Future opportunities/destinations considered (special)	<p>I was coming on to ask about supported employment. Is this ever coming up in your discussions? S. It hasn't. It could do but we never had a student who wanted that.</p> <p>L. But are there any opportunities for it if you had a student? S. Connexions will mention that it is something they can help with. But it is not really something that any of our students have ever wanted. I suppose the last two aspects, Employment opportunities after secondary school & University opportunities. From what you have told me may not be explored but you can tell me. S. No. It is not something that has come up.</p> <p>There is a section in the pupil's booklet</p>	<p>Future opportunities may be limited by default thinking – we do as we always have for students like this.</p> <p>Within this limited view a range of (restricted) options seem to be made available to pupils.</p>

	<p>where they can talk or write about what they would like, about whether or not they would like to leave home in the future, because it is not really something that our students do. They don't see that as being part of what they could do. Aspirations are at all levels. I am sure that in mainstream school students are looking very much at the educational side of things but for our students it may be supported independent living.</p> <p>S. If it is mentioned by the young person. Some may not want that and will say categorically 'no my future would be living at home, that is where I want to be'. So then it may be living at home with a personal assistant who can actually go out with them</p>	
Information for parents	<p>What happened last year was that C (facilitator) got the parents together and explained the process. L. Do you think that was a good idea? S. We did not have a good turnout. We held it at E; we had 5 parents turn up from about 12.</p> <p>S. It could. I have asked R (SEN Officer) if she is still in contact with C to see if he could let us have a copy of the presentation he put together. He had done paper work so that parents could come, watch the presentation, tea and coffee, take away the paper work and get back to himself or the schools if there was anything they were uncertain of. The paperwork would save us a lot of work.</p> <p>Do you think that parents know what transition planning is about and who tells them? S. No L. So from what you are saying if it weren't for one person to take the initiative to give a presentation to parents they would not know. No one is doing that at the moment. S. No.</p> <p>I have met with R and explained what we did in the previous 2 years. The first year the facilitator got involved with the families and the second year C put</p>	<p>Parental involvement had been facilitated by external personnel and without this resource there is no plan to continue to engage parents. This seems to be limited by resources rather than willingness to do the necessary work.</p>

	<p>together a presentation. This year it is still very much up in the air. The second year transition review parents will be aware of what the process is, the first year transition parents really won't. If we could have the stuff from C it would be wonderful because it would save me a job. Getting my head round to put it all down to have something I can then pass on to parents, it is a big job really.</p>	
<p>Meaning of transition: External service involvement for post-secondary destinations</p>	<p>I was coming on to ask about supported employment. Is this ever coming up in your discussions? S. It hasn't. It could do but we never had a student who wanted that.</p> <p>I suppose the last two aspects, Employment opportunities after secondary school & University opportunities. From what you have told me may not be explored but you can tell me. S. No. It is not something that has come up.</p> <p>S. Connexions and at the Year 12 review then there would be the children's social worker there and there would also be the adult care manager though that person may not have been always identified. If the children's social worker is on the ball that would be already in place so you get the two attending. L. So the social worker is identified as a key person and do all your families have a social worker? S. Yes they do.</p> <p>Anyone else? S. If they attend any respite or outreach after school usually there is somebody from that service as well.</p> <p>L. What about health? S. As and when needed. PMLD reviews yes. For students who come through the main body of the school quite often do not need. If there is a specific need like last year I had a young lady with a visual impairment the sensory impaired team came. L. So in a way involvement seems to depend on the nature of a pupil's disability as well. S. On</p>	<p>Invited personnel depend on the child's needs. In the first quotations, the focus seems more on care needs than either educational needs or holistic planning.</p>

	<p>their needs.</p> <p>L. Do you access other services or professionals who can help you determine a pupil's potential for further education or other opportunities? S. Yes. The local college will come along. We tend to stick with the local college because it has to be the first port of call. Social services will get involved in funding if students want to go further afield. So we always make sure and see whether the local college can meet a student's needs before we look elsewhere.</p> <p>L. In terms of external services, what has been an aspect that facilitated good transition planning? S. I think it is what I said before that they turn up.</p>	
Meaning of transitions: focus on delivering PCRs		
PCRs versus regular annual reviews	<p>What we found with the person-centred transition reviews is that you get people there. They come. I don't know what it is. Whether it is the personal invitation from the student or whether people now do understand transition reviews. But they do come, whereas for an ordinary annual review I find it very difficult to get all the right people in one place.</p>	<p>PCRs are better than normal reviews because people turn up – is this simply because they are an LA priority and newly piloted and when the newness wears off things will return to normal?</p>
Pupils participation (special)	<p>Person-centred transition reviews is that you get people there. They come. I don't know what it is. Whether it is the personal invitation from the student or whether people now do understand transition reviews</p> <p>It just was something we hadn't thought of. We had our systems in place and it wasn't something that students were a central part of even though the review was about them. It has changed our way at looking at things.</p> <p>There is a section in the pupil's booklet where they can talk or write about what they would like, about whether or not they would like to leave home in the future, because it is not really something</p>	<p>There is greater involvement of pupils – from the selection of who will be there, to thinking about different aspects of their future and this can be taken into consideration for future planning and resource allocation.</p>

	<p>that our students do. They don't see that as being part of what they could do. Aspirations are at all levels. I am sure that in mainstream school students are looking very much at the educational side of things but for our students it may be supported independent living.</p> <p>S. If it is mentioned by the young person. Some may not want that and will say categorically 'no my future would be living at home, that is where I want to be'. So then it may be living at home with a personal assistant who can actually go out with them</p> <p>S. I think that would be working through the booklet with the students, because they are very focussed then. They have thought about what contribution they want to make, where they want to go and what the next step is for them. Our students all have a learning difficulty and cannot think fast. Put on the spot in a review they would be unable to do that. L. Would a support assistant helping them out with this process help? S. It does not have to be a support assistant or a person but having had the opportunity before the review to focus and think about things that are important to them now and maybe other things they would like to develop. Good preparation is important.</p> <p>S. I always explain to the pupil that there are people who I need to invite to make sure that things can be put in place but there are people then who the student can invite. They often go for their favourite support worker if they are in respite, who they relate well to, or a favourite cousin they want there. So I always point out that there are people I need to invite to make sure that things get done for them but then there are those people they can invite as well. Sometime the two overlap.</p>	
Pupil views obtained before the review process (special)	L. Ok so would you say that year 9 is actually the starting point of some basic transition work? S. Tentatively yes. M gets	The extent to which pupil views are collected before-hand

	<p>to know them then. Purely for her, it suits her. It is not something that we specifically build in as a school. It is just that M likes to pick them up at that age and start to get to know them and attend their reviews.</p>	<p>(previous codes) are influenced by the personal traits of external agencies rather than being planned by the school.</p>
Responsibility for planning (special)	<p>L. Ok so would you say that year 9 is actually the starting point of some basic transition work? S. Tentatively yes. M gets to know them then. Purely for her, it suits her. It is not something that we specifically build in as a school. It is just that M likes to pick them up at that age and start to get to know them and attend their reviews.</p> <p>L. What about health? S. As and when needed. PMLD reviews yes. For students who come through the main body of the school quite often do not need. If there is a specific need like last year I had a young lady with a visual impairment the sensory impaired team came. L. So in a way involvement seems to depend on the nature of a pupil's disability as well. S. On their needs.</p> <p>L. Do you access other services or professionals who can help you determine a pupil's potential for further education or other opportunities? S. Yes. The local college will come along. We tend to stick with the local college because it has to be the first port of call. Social services will get involved in funding if students want to go further afield. So we always make sure and see whether the local college can meet a student's needs before we look elsewhere.</p> <p>L. Is there a specific person you would liaise with from the college? S. Yes though it could change. The person from college will be responsible for matching potential students with college courses. She also considers certain issues such as if a student needed to be assisted with feeding or helped with toileting, it would then be her role to make the college aware of what the student's needs would be.</p>	<p>Some aspects of the planning process appear to be allocated to different people (pupil views – Connexions; health needs; VI; social services for funding; college staff for education). The mix depends on pupil needs.</p> <p>The responsibility for helping participants know about the PCR process is not owned by the school.</p>

	<p>Do you think that parents know what transition planning is about and who tells them? S. No L. So from what you are saying if it weren't for one person to take the initiative to give a presentation to parents they would not know. No one is doing that at the moment. S. No.</p> <p>L. Is there anyone else that can help you with that? Does it have to be the SEN Officer? S. It needs to be somebody who knows about the process. I cannot really think, because the social workers are not going to have time. The people who were trained as facilitators and are aware of the process are the SEN Officers, from the schools there is mainly myself, M and C. The social workers are going to say they cannot because of caseloads. Connexions...they would perhaps be someone who we could look at. I have also asked if we could have C's stuff so at least we have something to work on.</p>	
Role of Connexions (as perceived by special school)	<p>L. But are there any opportunities for it if you had a student? S. Connexions will mention that it is something they can help with. But it is not really something that any of our students have ever wanted.</p> <p>S. Connexions. They are always there. They would have done an interview with the student or if the student is a PMLD student, they would have spent time getting to know the pupil by spending time with the person by with her being in class with them or talking to the staff. So they would have done their interview beforehand.</p> <p>S. M (Connexions advisor for the school) actually likes to come in at Year 9 and start to get to know them, only tentatively with questions like 'what do you like doing?' 'How many brothers and sisters have you got?' But she builds up, she sees them every year and it gradually builds up so by the time they come into post-16 she is starting to focus more on what they would like to do after. Because she would</p>	Connexions are seen as being important in getting to know children and then focussing on what the children could do after leaving school.

	<p>have found out what their likes and dislikes are.</p> <p>L. Ok so would you say that year 9 is actually the starting point of some basic transition work? S. Tentatively yes. M gets to know them then. Purely for her, it suits her. It is not something that we specifically build in as a school. It is just that M likes to pick them up at that age and start to get to know them and attend their reviews.</p>	
School staff aspirations (special)	<p>I was coming on to ask about supported employment. Is this ever coming up in your discussions? S. It hasn't. It could do but we never had a student who wanted that.</p> <p>L. But are there any opportunities for it if you had a student? S. Connexions will mention that it is something they can help with. But it is not really something that any of our students have ever wanted. I suppose the last two aspects, Employment opportunities after secondary school & University opportunities. From what you have told me may not be explored but you can tell me. S. No. It is not something that has come up.</p>	Low staff aspirations may limit the range of possibilities explored for post-secondary transition
Tensions related to PCRs	<p>L. and is that perceived as a good thing by parents as well? S. Yes, because then it could also be an issue for them if they have other children at home and you are doing it after school. An hour and a half can be a long time.</p> <p>I have met with R and explained what we did in the previous 2 years. The first year the facilitator got involved with the families and the second year C put together a presentation. This year it is still very much up in the air. The second year transition review parents will be aware of what the process is, the first year transition parents really won't. If we could have the stuff from C it would be wonderful because it would save me a job. Getting my head round to put it all down to have</p>	<p>Tension between taking time to do the review and the pressure that this puts on parents and professionals.</p> <p>Tension on wanting to inform parents about what is happening and having the time to produce materials or run meetings</p>

	<p>something I can then pass on to parents, it is a big job really.</p> <p>L. Is there anyone else that can help you with that? Does it have to be the SEN Officer? S. It needs to be somebody who knows about the process. I cannot really think, because the social workers are not going to have time. The people who were trained as facilitators and are aware of the process are the SEN Officers, from the schools there is mainly myself, M and C. The social workers are going to say they cannot because of caseloads. Connexions...they would perhaps be someone who we could look at. I have also asked if we could have C's stuff so at least we have something to work on.</p>	
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